NATION

West Asia war: Gas crematoriums close down in Pune

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BUSINESS

Investors lose Rs 22L cr as markets crash over 2%

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SPORTS

IPL starts on 28 March, final in B'luru on 31 May

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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B'luru hotels may shutdown from 10 March due to LPG shortage

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The West Asia war just got too close for comfort for Bengalureans. Hotels in Bengaluru may stay shut from Tuesday due to commercial LPG cylinder supply being stopped abruptly, Bangalore Hotels Association said on Monday. They added that oil companies had earlier said that there would be no disruption in gas supply for 70 days.

The body said thousands would be affected from Tuesday if the LPG shortage isn't resolved.

In a notice, the body said the supply of commercial gas cylinders was stopped without any prior notice.

"The supply of gas cylinders for commercial use has been stopped from today. Since the hotel industry is classified as an Essential Service, the common people, senior citizens, students, medical and other people who depend on it will face difficulties in their daily meals," they said. This crisis is likely to also affect student and hospital canteens, corporates and travellers. They urged the concerned Union Ministers to take immediate action.

Established in 1936, the association represents over 3,000 restaurants and hospitality chains.

LPG is mainly propane and butane, produced from refining crude oil and processing natural gas. Oil Marketing Companies, including Indian Oil Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, meet about 40 per cent of India's LPG demand.

Meanwhile, the minimum gap for booking a domestic LPG refill has been increased to 25 days from the current 21 days, a move aimed at preventing hoarding and ensuring equitable distribution of cylinders. —*Salar News*

Oil price hits record high; India sees 26% surge

World on edge as crude nears levels last seen during Covid

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Crude oil prices surged 26 per cent on Monday to a record Rs 10,549 per barrel in futures trade as the war in West Asia conflict disrupted global energy supply.

Globally, Brent crude climbed 60 per cent since the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on 28 February. On Monday it surged nearly 24 per cent to $114.93 per barrel.

The last time Brent and US crude traded near current levels was during the Covid pandemic and in 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine. Analysts say the current situation is similar to 1973s oil crisis, which saw crude prices rally 300 per cent.

The surge is due to disruption in production and shipping in West Asia. Iran's attacks in the Strait of Hormuz have restricted tanker movement through the route that carries about 20 per cent of global oil supplies. Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi, Qatar and Bahrain have cut production after attacks on refineries. Oil depots in Tehran were hit in Israeli strikes. Iran exports 1.6 million barrels of crude daily, mainly to China. The shortage of crude oil is pushing fuel prices higher and straining economies, particularly in Asia. Higher oil prices could raise inflation, weaken currencies and dampen consumer spending. For India, the world's third-largest crude importer, the impact could be significant. India imports 85 per cent of its oil, and every $1 rise in crude increases the bill by Rs 16,000 crore. Analysts said the price surge could raise India's foreign exchange outflow by $8B per month. Government, however, said petrol and diesel prices will not be raised immediately.

Saudi Aramco's Ras Tanura refinery, one of the world's largest oil facilities, was forced to shut down following a drone strike —*SCREENGRAB*

INDIA DECLINES IEA CALL ON OIL RESERVES

India has decided not to join the International Energy Agency initiative to release strategic oil reserves to cool global prices. India said the country's 5.33MT of reserves, currently about 80 per cent full, are only for supply disruptions. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 7*

Contact with Iran difficult: EAM in Parl

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

India on Monday said that contract with Iran leadership is difficult, as it put the safety of one crore Indians in the region as its top priority.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in the Parliament that New Delhi is struggling to have a dialogue with the warring nations on the conflict in West Asia.

He also said that Iran had sought India's permission for three of its ships to dock at Indian ports and the approval was granted the next day.

He said the Indian government has been monitoring the evolving situation and has already brought back 67,000 stranded Indians from the conflict zone.

Jaishankar said the safety of Indian nationals and national interests, such as energy security and trade, remain the topmost priority for the government.

Meanwhile, the Opposition voraciously protested, demanding that a full-fledged discussion should precede his statement on the situation in West Asia. While the Opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha, they forced the Lok Sabha to be adjourned amid noisy scenes.

The government had on 28 February expressed its deep concern and urged all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians.

Jaishankar said Prime Minister Modi has spoken to leaders of several countries in West Asia and has received assurances that the well-being of the Indian community would be a priority for them.

Jaishankar informed Parliament about the steps taken by the government to bring back Indians and provided details of the operation of flights by several airlines to bring back those affected. Referring to concerns on the energy front amid rising global crude oil prices, he said the government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account costs and risks of the energy markets. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

QUOTE of THE DAY

"Short term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, is a very small price to pay for USA, and World, Safety and Peace

—DONALD TRUMP,
US President

In an all-time low, Rupee breaches the 92 mark

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

The rupee crashed to its all-time closing low of 92.21 against the US dollar on Monday, losing 39 paise during the session, as global crude oil prices saw a sharp spike, and the greenback strengthened amid worsening conflict in the West Asia. Forex traders said heightened geopolitical uncertainty risks driving energy costs higher, which could widen the trade deficit and stoke inflationary pressures. Moreover, withdrawal of foreign funds amid intense selling in domestic equity markets further pressured the rupee, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 92.22 and rose briefly to 92.15 but kept losing ground through the session and recorded an intraday low of 92.35.—*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 7*

Mojtaba is Iran's Supreme Leader

DUBAI, 9 MARCH

Iran on Monday named hardline cleric Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader following the death of his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, signalling continued defiance amid the ongoing war with the United States and Israel.

The secretive 56-year-old cleric, who has close ties with the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, succeeds his father who ruled Iran for 37 years before being killed during the war's opening strikes. The appointment by the Assembly of Experts came even as heavy US and Israeli bombardment continued for more than a week.

Khamenei now controls Iran's armed forces and decisions on its nuclear programme.

In Israel, sirens sounded repeatedly as Iranian drones and missiles continued to hit the country. A man was killed in central Israel in a missile strike, the first such death in a week, while a woman was wounded.

Mojtaba Khamenei y—*PTI*

Israel said it struck Iran's city of Isfahan, targeting Revolutionary Guard and Basij command centres, a rocket engine production facility and missile launch sites.

Iran has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states. An oil facility in the United Arab Emirates also caught fire after an Iranian strike

Saudi Arabia condemned Iran after a thwarted drone attack on its Shaybah oil field. The UAE reported 15 missiles and 18 drones fired on Monday alone, bringing the total since the war began to 253 missiles and 1,440 drones. Four foreign nationals have been killed and 117 injured in the UAE.

Iran also struck Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, wounding 32 people in a residential areas. A US service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack in Saudi, raising the number of US troops killed to seven. Russia's President Vladimir Putin congratulated Mojtaba and reaffirmed Moscow's support for Tehran. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Pages 5 & 6*

No Indian fatality in Saudi: Embassy

RIYADH, 9 MARCH

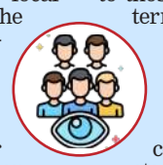
The Indian Embassy in Riyadh on Monday said no Indian was killed in the projectile strike that hit a residential compound in Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia, on Sunday.

In a social media post, the Saudi Civil Defence said two Bangladeshi nationals were killed and 11 others from Bangladesh injured, along with one injured Indian national.

The Indian embassy said the injured Indian is undergoing treatment at a government hospital and it remains in contact with Saudi authorities. Earlier reports had suggested an Indian was among those dead in the Saudi attacks creating a panic. —*PTI*

INDIA ASKS CITIZENS IN BAHRAIN TO REMAIN VIGILANT

India on Monday advised its citizens in Bahrain to remain vigilant and follow safety guidelines issued by local authorities in view of the prevailing regional situation.



In an advisory, the Embassy of India in Bahrain urged Indian nationals to monitor updates from the mission and local authorities. The embassy said it continues to function normally.

Transit for stranded Indians is being arranged through Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, with priority given to those on tourist or short-term visas.

The Embassy of India in Riyadh is obtaining individual Saudi transit visas. Travellers must carry confirmed onward tickets and a Note Verbale issued by the Riyadh mission. Saudi transit visas will remain valid for 72–96 hours.

Woman killed in Kodagu elephant attack; 2nd in a week

KODAGU, 9 MARCH

A 53-year-old woman and former gram panchayat member was killed in a wild elephant attack at Valnur village in Kushalnagar taluk of Kodagu district on Monday.

The victim is Jalajakshi, a former member of the Nanjarayapatna Gram Panchayat. She was reportedly walking in the area when a wild elephant suddenly attacked her.

The incident comes within a week after another elephant attack in Bettathur village in Madikeri, where a pre-university student, Poojya, was killed. She was reportedly trampled by an elephant while getting off a motorcycle with her parents.

Residents have expressed anger against the Forest Department, alleging that authorities have failed to take effective measures to curb the increasing movement of wild elephants into human habitations.

Human-wildlife conflict has been rising across Karnataka. Districts such as Mysuru, Chikkamagaluru, Chamarajanagar, Kodagu and Hassan have reported increasing wildlife attacks.

Kodagu alone has recorded 32 deaths in the past four years, the second highest among affected districts. Villagers have demanded stricter preventive action. —*Salar News*

Oppn seeks to impeach CEC; WB says Gyanesh 'go back'

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Opposition parties are set to move an impeachment motion seeking removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, who also faced 'go back' slogans while visiting a temple in Kolkata.

The draft of the impeachment notice is ready and likely to be submitted this week.

Sources from Congress said they would support the notice. Other INDIA bloc parties are also on board, and the notice has been drafted collectively.

Opposition MPs will now collect signatures of MPs from both Houses. As per rules, the signatures of at least 100 MPs from Lok Sabha and at least 50 MPs from Rajya Sabha are required for the notice.

The CEC can be impeached only on the grounds of proven misbehaviour or incapacity.

A motion for removal may be introduced in either House of Parliament and must be passed by a special majority -- a majority of the total membership of the House and a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting.

Meanwhile, TMC workers displayed black flags and raised "go back" slogans against Kumar on Monday as he visited the revered Kalighat temple in Kolkata.

Kumar is in Kolkata to hold meetings with political parties, enforcement agencies and senior administrative officials to review preparedness for the upcoming Assembly elections.

Police personnel present at the spot brought the situation under control.

Similar demonstrations were seen near the airport on 8 March over the special intensive revision exercise, after Kumar arrived in the city.

Activists of Left parties also staged protests outside the airport. —*PTI*

PAK RELIES ON CHINA

India 2nd largest arms importer after Ukraine: SIPRI report

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

India was the world's second largest importer of arms and military hardware from 2021 to 2025 and the largest imports came from Russia, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

Ukraine which received 9.7 per cent of all arms transfers in 2021-25 was the world's largest arms importer. China dropped out of the top 10 arms importers for the first time since 1991-1995 due to expanded domestic production of its own designs, the think tank noted in its report, 'Trends in International Arms Transfers'.

The US supplied 42 per cent of all international arms transfers during 2021-25.

India, Pakistan, Japan and Australia -- ranked among the 10 largest arms importers globally in 2021-25.

The main supplier to the region in 2021- 25 was the US,

which accounted for 35 per cent of regional arms imports. Russia accounted for another 17 per cent and China for 14 per cent.

India also bought arms from France and Israel as well.

China supplied 80 per cent of Pakistan's arms imports in 2021-25.

The US has further cemented its dominance as an arms supplier, even in an increasingly multipolar world, said Pieter Wezeman, senior researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

For importers, US arms offer advanced capabilities and a way of fostering good relations, he said. While conflicts in Asia and Oceania and the Middle East continue to drive arms imports, the sharp increase in arms flows to European states pushed global arms transfers up almost 10 per cent, SIPRI further said. —*PTI*

Has right to be heard: SC on Unnao rape survivor's plea

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Unnao rape survivor to be a party in the CBI petition contesting the suspension of Kuldeep Singh Sengar's life sentence, stating she has a right to be heard.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi permitted her to join the case, emphasising victims are entitled to participate in proceedings affecting their interests, as per an earlier judgement in the Lakhimpur Kheri case. The Chief Justice said, "We are of the view that the victim has the right to be heard," and granted two weeks to file her affidavit opposing the suspension. The bench, however, dismissed an intervention application filed by a relative of the survivor alleging threats to his life and liberty, with the CJI advising him to seek protection through an independent remedy in the high court. The court did not consider the CBI's plea against the suspension, as Solicitor General Tushar Mehta was unavailable. —*PTI*

Man bludgeoned to death with stone in the City

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

A 24-year-old man was allegedly bludgeoned to death with a stone on the outskirts of the city, police said on Monday. The deceased has been identified as Tilak, they said. The incident occurred on Sunday in a field near Gollahalli Gutte under the jurisdiction of Bannerghatta police station, police said. According to police, unidentified miscreants allegedly crushed Tilak to death using a hollow block stone. The exact motive behind the murder is yet to be ascertained. Bannerghatta police visited the spot and began an investigation. A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) also reached the scene and collected evidence. A probe is underway.—*PTI*

Farmers' body protests against State policies in Tumakuru

TUMAKURU, 9 MARCH

The Karnataka State Farmers' Association (Green Sene) on Monday organised a protest against the State government's 'anti-farmer' agenda, in front of the district collector's office in Tumakuru.

Farmers demanded the immediate granting of land rights to those who have been actively cultivating lands within the Tumakuru city limits for many years.

Members of the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (Green Sene) launched an intense Dharani Satyagraha, wearing green shawls and demanding that the government address their grievances.

Farmers from across the district gathered, brandishing their traditional green shawls, to mount a vocal protest against the state government's "anti-farmer" agenda.

The demonstration brought traffic to a standstill as protesters occupied the road in front of the collector's office.

Members of the Karnataka State farmers' Association staging a protest against the state government's anti-farmer policies at Tumakuru –*x*

The protest centred on a multi-point charter of demands intended to protect the livelihoods of farmers.

They also demanded the repeal of the Land Reforms Act, arguing that allowing non-farmers to purchase agricultural land threatens the food security and heritage of the farming community.

Protesters have strictly warned against the acquisition of fertile agricultural land for non-agricultural or industrial purposes.

The association is demanding a complete prohibition on mining activities within agricultural zones, citing the irreversible damage such operations cause to soil fertility and irrigation water sources.

Leaders of the Green Sene emphasised that this is a fight for the survival of agriculture in the region.

"We will not allow our fertile lands to be sacrificed for commercial greed," one representative stated.

The dharna will continue until the government provides written assurances to review these contentious policies. —*ANI*

Govt drops stadium plan on KSIC land

The govt proposal saw protests as it would hit production of Mysore Silk

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The State government has dropped its proposal to utilise five acres of land belonging to the Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation (KSIC) for constructing a stadium at T Narasipura in Mysuru district, Sericulture Minister K Venkatesh informed the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

The proposal had triggered protests as the land forms part of the KSIC filature factory, a key unit involved in producing the famed Mysore Silk sarees and other silk products. Employees and environmental activists had opposed the plan, warning that nearly 500 trees would have to be felled if the project went ahead.

Following sustained opposition and a series of protests, the Minister clarified that the government would not proceed with the stadium at the site. Instead, it has begun taking measures to strengthen KSIC units in view of the strong demand for KSIC-brand Mysore Silk.

Responding to concerns raised by Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka, Venkatesh said the proposal had been based on incorrect information provided by officials. "The land falls under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's constituency. Officers had informed us that land was available there for a stadium. The Chief Minister has now been apprised of the facts and we are dropping the proposal," he said.

Ashoka alleged that the government was attempting to "close down" the KSIC unit. "The Maharaja of Mysuru established KSIC. It is a profit-making organisation. Why build a stadium there? If the government wants to construct one, it should purchase land elsewhere," he said.

Urban Development Minister BS Suresha also supported protecting KSIC, noting the strong global demand for its products. "KSIC sarees are sought after worldwide. Even relatives from the United States call us to procure them, and there is a two-month waiting period," he said, while urging better wages and stronger support for workers.

The minister said KSIC produces about 350–400 sarees daily and demand remains high due to strict quality standards. Sarees with minor defects are sold at 25–30 per cent discounts, often drawing early-morning queues at outlets. KSIC received the Geographical Indication tag for Mysore Silk in 2005-06.

Ashoka also noted that the historic filature factory at T Narasipura was established in 1912 by Mysuru Maharaja Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar.

Raising concerns about workers' pay, Ashoka said some employees initially earn Rs 3,000 a month and Rs 15,000–16,000 after confirmation. Venkatesh clarified that Rs 3,000 is paid during the training period.

Between 2022-23 and 2024-25, KSIC produced 3,10,667 sarees and sold 3,09,659, recording profits of Rs 46.75 crore, Rs 73.40 crore and Rs 101.15 crore respectively.

Meanwhi;e, The Assembly has extended its congratulations to the Indian cricket team for winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, bringing pride to the nation. After an obituary reference, Speaker UT Khader read out the message on behalf of the House. —*Salar News*

Opposition Leader R Ashoka addresses the Assembly during the Budget Session at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Monday —MOHAMMED ASAD

'No differences in govt on internal quotas, decision soon'

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

There are no differences in the Congress on the internal reservation issue and the government would take a final decision at the next Cabinet meeting, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Monday.

Speaking to reporters here, he said discussions were still underway to work out the proportional distribution of reservation after the total quota was brought down from 56 per cent to 50 per cent as per court directions.

"There are no factions at all. Different people express different opinions. Just because someone expresses an opinion does not mean it becomes a faction," Parameshwara said, dismissing speculation about divisions within the party.

He said that after the Nagamohan Das report was submitted, the government retained the 56 per cent base and created three categories of internal reservation — six per cent for SC left, six per cent for SC right and five per cent for 'touchables'/others — and that the proposal had not faced opposition at the time.

The court ruled that reservations could not exceed 50 per cent as per the ceiling in the Indra Sawhney case. —*PTI*

'TECH, POLICY, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR TO SHAPE INDIA'S MOBILITY FUTURE'

KOLAR, 9 MARCH

India's future mobility landscape will be shaped by a combination of technology, policy, economics, environmental considerations and human behaviour, NITI Aayog member VK Saraswat said on Monday.

Speaking at the Japan–India Mobility Summit 2026 in Bengaluru, he highlighted the growing role of digital innovation in transforming the country's mobility ecosystem.

Saraswat said India and Japan bring complementary strengths to the partnership. While India offers scale, market growth and expanding capabilities in software and artificial intelligence, Japan contributes advanced technological expertise, engineering excellence and global leadership in safety and mobility systems.

"The next phase of our partnership should move beyond infrastructure towards technology co-creation—from hydrogen mobility and smart transport systems to next-generation vehicles and integrated mobility platforms," he said.

According to Saraswat, mobility transformation is no longer a sectoral reform but a structural redesign of energy, infrastructure, data and industry. He added that through pragmatic pathways and sustained collaboration, the two countries can develop scalable solutions that accelerate decarbonisation and set global benchmarks for sustainable mobility.

He noted that India's mobility transition must cater to the needs of 1.4 billion people while reducing logistics costs, which currently account for 13–14 per cent of the country's GDP, and supporting rapid urbanisation.

India has therefore adopted a diversified and technology-neutral strategy that includes battery electric vehicles, strong and plug-in hybrids, ethanol blending, compressed biogas, LNG, green hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuels, he said. Electrification is gaining momentum, with electric vehicles accounting for 8 per cent of total vehicle sales in 2025. —*SALAR NEWS*

I can't disclose who I meet in Delhi: DKS

DELHI, 9 MARCH

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said he cannot publicly disclose details of the meetings he holds during his visits to the national capital.

Speaking to reporters at Karnataka Bhawan in New Delhi, he said he had travelled to Delhi on Sunday to attend a wedding in a friend's family.

Asked about completing six years as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president on Tuesday, Shivakumar said he would host a dinner for ministers, MLAs and MLCs. "I will organise another dinner later for defeated candidates, district presidents and block presidents," he added.

When asked about speculation surrounding his Delhi visits, he said there was no need for discussions.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar's visit to Delhi has triggered fresh speculation about a possible leadership change in Karnataka after the Budget Session of the Legislature, which is scheduled to conclude on 27 March.

Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar in New Delhi —*ANI*

According to party sources, Shivakumar travelled to Delhi with AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge from Kalaburagi on Sunday evening after attending a programme to launch development projects worth Rs 1,069 crore at Chittapur.

Amid the political row, Siddaramaiah recently said he could continue and present two more budgets if given the opportunity by the party High Command. —*SALAR NEWS*

Yatnal rules out joining BJP, vows to launch JCB

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Expelled BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal on Monday ruled out re-joining the saffron party as long as what he termed a "corrupt family" continues to lead the party in Karnataka.

He also announced that his yet-to-be-launched JCB party will come to power in the state, and he will be the next Chief Minister.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, the Vijayapura MLA said he had not come to meet BJP leaders and dismissed speculation that he was lobbying to return to the party.

"I am not the kind of person who goes to someone's house pleading to be taken into the BJP. Don't run such stories tomorrow unnecessarily. I have no need to go there and fall at someone's feet," Yatnal said. He said his visit to the capital was purely personal.

Responding to a question on whether he would return to the BJP, Yatnal said he would not accept the leadership of what he described as a 'corrupt family' in the party's Karnataka unit.

"As long as the corrupt family remains in the BJP's leadership in Karnataka, I can't join BJP," he said. — *PTI*

Karnataka signs pact for agri innovation centre in Kalaburagi

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The Karnataka government on Monday signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Krishi Kalpa Foundation to establish a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in the agriculture and allied sectors in Kalaburagi.

The agreement was signed by the Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology through the Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS).

According to officials, the

CoE will be set up under the Local Economy Acceleration Programme (LEAP), the State government's flagship Rs 1,000 crore five-year initiative aimed at boosting regional innovation, entrepreneurship and technology-led economic growth beyond Bengaluru.

Building on the earlier announcement of a Centre for Entrepreneurship in Kalaburagi, the facility will function as a research, innovation and entrepreneurship hub focused on agriculture.

Krishi Kalpa Foundation will operationalise the centre and lead innovation programmes, start-up support, research and initiatives for capacity-building of youths in the State. IT Minister Priyank Kharge said the Kalyana Karnataka has great potential to emerge as a hub for innovation in agriculture and rural enterprise. —*PTI*

Minister orders plan for floating solar plants on lakes

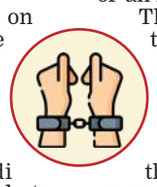
BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

State Minor Irrigation Minister NS Boseraju has instructed officials to finalise the implementation framework for floating solar power plants on lakes, based on a feasibility report from BHEL. The directions were given during a review meeting attended by the Secretary of the Minor Irrigation Department, BK Pavitra, BESCOM Managing Directors Shivashankar, KREDL's KP Rudrappaiah, and senior officials. A statement from the minister's office said BHEL had been tasked with preparing a feasibility study to promote green energy and reduce electricity costs for lift irrigation projects. After over six months of detailed study, BHEL proposed a pilot project at Somambudi Agrahara Lake in Kolar district, capable of generating around 100 MW of clean energy, boosting the state's renewable capacity. Minister Boseraju highlighted that hundreds of lift irrigation schemes consume significant electricity, increasing departmental expenses. —*PTI*

SC transfers bomb threat FIRs against woman to K'taka

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Monday transferred the FIRs lodged in different states against a woman, accused of sending e-mails threatening blasts, including at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, to Karnataka.



A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was informed that as of now 23 FIRs were lodged against the woman, who was a consultant of an MNC in Chennai.

The bench was also told that out of the 23 FIRs, 12 were lodged in Karnataka while six were registered in Gujarat.

The woman had sent these e-mails to defame a man, whom she dreamt would be her husband, after he married another woman. The court passed the order while hearing her plea seeking clubbing of the FIRs—*PTI*

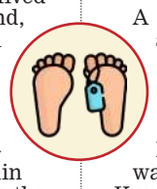
3 HELD FOR MURDER OVER GARBAGE HEAP

KOLAR, 9 MARCH

The Gownipalli police in Srinivasapur taluk of Kolar district have arrested three persons in connection with the murder of one Shaju Khan.

According to the police, Shaju Khan was injured in clashes that took place over dumping of garbage on a vacant land.

On Friday evening Shaju Khan is said to have brought some garbage from his house and was about to dump the same on a vacant site which belonged to his brother. Wasim, who lived on the adjacent land, picked a fight with Shaju Khan and attacked him with a machete.



While Shaju Khan succumbed to his injuries, his son Shahbuddin who was also injured in the melee is recovering.

Wasim and his brothers who fled from the scene were later arrested by the police. —*SALAR NEWS*

MAN DIES IN CAR FIRE IN CHIKKABALLAPUR

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 9 MARCH

A 65-year-old man died after his car caught fire near Achepalli Cross in Bagepalli taluk, Chikkaballapur district, police said on Monday. The deceased was identified as Uday Kumar, a resident of Raghuvanahalli on Kanakapura Road in the City.

The incident occurred on Sunday when he was returning after visiting his mother in his native place. Passersby alerted local police after noticing the car on fire. Fire tenders arrived promptly and extinguished the blaze, but the flames had spread rapidly, resulting in Kumar's death. His charred body was later recovered from the vehicle.

The police said it appears to be a case of suicide, as no evidence of an accident or mechanical fault was found that could have caused the fire. —*SALAR NEWS*

COMPANION ESCAPED UNHURT

Body of man abducted near B'luru found in TN, 1 held

BENGALURU, 9 MAR

The body of a real estate businessman was found with severe injuries in Tamil Nadu on Monday, a day after he was allegedly kidnapped by a gang.

According to the police, the victim, identified as Gopal alias Gopi, a resident of Honnakalasapura village in Anekal taluk on the outskirts of Bengaluru City, was engaged in real estate and financial business.

The police have arrested Mohan Babu, alleged to be the mastermind behind the crime, even as efforts are being made to nab his two associates.

On Sunday, Gopal and his friend Satish were travelling in a car from Attibele towards Anekal when another car

rammed into their vehicle near Karpur Gate in Anekal taluk. The assailants, who had allegedly planned to abduct Gopal, sprayed a chemical on both Gopal and his friend and forcibly kidnapped him before fleeing the spot in another car. Satish managed to escape the kidnappers and alerted Gopal's family, who in turn informed the police.

A team from the Anekal police station rushed to the spot and seized the vehicle used to block the car. "During preliminary investigation, it was found that Gopal and Mohan were both from Kalasapura village in Chikkamagaluru district and had been at loggerheads for about a decade. Earlier, Gopal used to work under Mohan in the real estate sector, but later became his competitor," a police official said. —*PTI*

Bal Bhavan to host summer camp for children in B'luru

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Bal Bhavan Society, Cubbon Park, Bengaluru, will organise Summer Camp – 2026 for children aged 5 to 16 years from 10 April to 15 May at Bal Bhavan on Kasturba Road in Cubbon Park.

The camp aims to provide children with a creative and educational platform during the summer holidays, helping them discover their talents and develop skills through a variety of engaging activities.

Participants will be introduced to creative and cultural activities such as painting, handicrafts, street drama, clay art, karate, yoga, mehendi, tabla and western dance.

For details, contact 080-22864189. —*SALAR NEWS*

— PTI

Cong protests in Jammu demanding Modi's resignation

JAMMU, 9 MARCH

The Jammu and Kashmir Congress held a protest outside its headquarters, demanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resignation over his alleged surrender to the US. Led by PCC president Tariq Hameed Karra, protesters called for the early restoration of statehood, carrying placards saying "Restore Statehood" and "Hamari Riyasat Hamara Haq". Police prevented them from moving forward, citing law and order concerns. Karra accused Modi of damaging India's global reputation, weakening institutions, and surrendering to international pressures, claiming "US and Israel have videos of Modi and are blackmailing him." Protesters also set US and Israeli flags ablaze, criticising restrictions on peaceful demonstrations and asserting their commitment to statehood and opposition to rising prices. —*PTI*

CBI summons Vijay again in Karur stampede probe

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned actor and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam chief Vijay on Tuesday for a fresh round of questioning in the Karur stampede case, officials said. The actor was earlier questioned at the agency headquarters on 12 and 19 January. The CBI took over the probe after a Supreme Court of India order into the 27 September, 2025 incident in Karur, Tamil Nadu. The court said, "The faith and trust of the general public in the process of investigation must be restored." —*PTI*

PM to launch NDA poll campaign in Kochi on 11 March

KOCHI, 9 MARCH

Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the NDA's massive election campaign convention, to be attended by around 50,000 people, here on 11 March, senior BJP leaders said on Monday. Modi will participate in the convention to be held at the Jawaharlal International Stadium in Kaloor, they said. Addressing reporters, BJP state General Secretary S Suresh said the NDA has adopted the slogan "Let change begin, Viksit Keralam with Modi" for the campaign. He also said the PM's speech may include special announcements related to the state. —*PTI*

— ANI

Ex-MLA Moquim announces new party in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR, 9 MARCH

Former MLA Mohammed Moquim announced the formation of a new party, Odisha Janata Congress, to be launched on 8 April. Moquim, expelled from Congress last December for questioning party leadership, said the new party would fight corruption. He criticised both BJD and Congress, claiming they had lost relevance. "Though BJD ruled for 24 years, it did nothing for the youth," he said. The party's flag is nearly ready, and he has applied for registration with the Election Commission. Moquim added, "The programme will be youth-centric," with a launch event at Bhubaneswar's Exhibition Ground attended by supporters, including his daughter Sofia Firdous, a Congress MLA. —*PTI*

LS fails to move motion against Birla

Congress will move the motion; Home Minister Amit Shah will speak against it

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Lok Sabha on Monday could not take up a notice seeking to move a resolution to remove Speaker Om Birla from office amid disruptions as opposition members demanded a debate on the West Asia situation.

The opposition's resolution is now likely to be taken up on Tuesday, at noon, soon after the Question Hour.

The motion will be moved by three Congress members -- Mohamed Jawed, K Suresh and Mallu Ravi.

The proposed motion questioned the conduct of the Speaker in disallowing the leader of the opposition and other opposition leaders to speak and in "making unwarranted allegations against women MPs belonging to the Opposition".

In the Lok Sabha, the government and the Chair, earlier in the day, accused the opposition of holding the House proceedings "hostage" to its demands.

LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs KC Venugopal, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other opposition leaders protest over the West Asia crisis, during the second part of Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi —*PTI*

Around 12 noon, as soon as Jaishankar rose to make a statement in the lower house on the "situation in West Asia", opposition members started raising slogans against the government.

Jagadambika Pal, who was chairing the proceedings, urged the opposition members to maintain decorum and allow the House to take up the resolution against Birla.

Pal said that while a resolution to remove Birla as the Lok Sabha Speaker is already on the agenda, the Opposition was pushing for a notice for adjournment of the proceedings to discuss West Asia.

The House was adjourned for the day shortly after it reassembled at 3 pm, following an earlier adjournment.

Outside the House, opposition MPs, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, staged a protest demanding a discussion on the West Asia conflict.

> **The government should explain its position on India's broader foreign policy. There should be a discussion on these issues and the way the government has auctioned its foreign policy**
>
> - Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party Chief

Earlier, Trinamool Congress MPs gave notices in both Houses of Parliament to discuss "voter disenfranchisement", sources said. In Lok Sabha, senior party leader Saugata Roy demanded a debate on the issue of voter disenfranchisement. —*PTI*

RS: 6 win unopposed in TN, 7 in M'rashtra

CHENNAI, 9 MARCH

All six candidates vying for the Rajya Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu have been elected unopposed. The six candidates are DMK's Tiruchi Siva and Constandine Ravindran, Congress's Christopher Manickam, DMDK's LK Sudhish, AIADMK's M Thambi Durai, and PMK's Anbumani Ramadoss. Notably, Tiruchi Siva and Thambidurai have been re-elected. The official also confirmed that the nominations of PMK founder S Ramadoss's aide Swaminathan was rejected.

SHARAD PAWAR AMONG 7 ELECTED UNOPPOSED

Six candidates of the ruling Mahayuti alliance, including Union Minister Ramdas Athawale and BJP General Secretary Vinod Tawde, and Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi nominee Sharad Pawar, were elected unopposed too.Besides Athawale and Tawde, the BJP had fielded two more candidates, Ramrao Wadkute and Maya Ivnate.

CONG WINS HIMACHAL

Congress candidate Anurag Sharma was declared the elected representative for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Himachal Pradesh, which was previously held by BJP's Indu Goswami. No other candidates were in the contest. This marks Congress' return to the Rajya Sabha after 10 years.

BJP MLA Terash Gowalla and United People's Party Liberal chief Pramod Boro were elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Assam.

BJP APPOINTS OBSERVERS

Meanwhile, BJP appointed central observers for Rajya Sabha elections in Bihar, Haryana, and Odisha. Union Minister Harsh Malhotra and Chhattisgarh's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma have been assigned to Bihar. For Haryana, Gujarat's Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi was picked, while Maharashtra's Minister Chandrasekhar Bawankule will oversee the elections in Odisha. —PTI

Jan Dhan: No fine for 0 balance

About 72 crore Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA), including those under the Mantri Jan Dhan scheme, are not subject to any penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. She said banks offer zero-balance savings accounts facility in BSBDAs to ensure universal access to banking facilities. These accounts do not require maintenance of any minimum balance, and the account holders are provided basic banking services free of charge, without levy of any penal charges. —*PTI*

'Manikarnika not under ASI care'

Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi is "not a protected monument" under the Archaeological Survey of India, and the ongoing work at the old ghat is a project aimed at "restoring" its strength, the government informed Parliament. Recently, the redevelopment work underway at the historic ghat in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi had triggered a row, with several political parties alleging that the historic elements of the stone-made ghat had been damaged due to civil work. SP MP Dharmendra Yadav also questioned Centre on the mattter. —*PTI*

CM Mamata Banerjee, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee at a sit-in against alleged arbitrary deletions from the post-SIR electoral rolls, in Kolkata —*PTI*

BJP INTERFERED AT TMC PROTEST: DIDI

KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

Alleging that the BJP and "its agencies" were distributing leaflets during her protest in Kolkata, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday directed TMC workers to hand them over to the police.

The police have detained two people who were distributing leaflets publicising PM Narendra Modi's 14 March rally in Kolkata.

Banerjee's sit-in demonstration has been continuing for the last three days at Dharmatala in Kolkata over the special intensive revision exercise.

"How can they campaign for their programme at our meeting? This is not done. Catch them and hand them over to the police before they escape. I am asking Minister Sashi Panja to lodge an FIR immediately," Banerjee said.

The TMC head said BJP was resorting to "unfair tricks" as their meetings were evoking a lukewarm response. — *PTI*

TMC flags SIR, BJP seeks fewer phases

KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

The row over West Bengal SIR spilt into the Election Commission's pre-poll consultations on Monday, with the TMC alleging voter harassment and the BJP pressing for fewer phases in the elections.

TMC, BJP, CPI(M), Congress and other parties met the EC's full bench led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar at a hotel in New Town to place their concerns before it.

TMC alleged that the revision process had led to harassment of ordinary citizens and claimed its concerns were not adequately heard during the interaction.

State Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said she was asked not to "shout" while raising objections about the exercise.

She said whenever the party attempted to raise concerns over the SIR process, the commission responded by saying the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court, where the TMC has challenged the exercise.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, EC officials at a meeting with National and State political parties West Bengal in Kolkata —*PTI*

SC to hear on WB voters' deletion

The Supreme Court agreed to consider on Tuesday a fresh plea filed by some persons whose names were deleted from the electoral rolls in West Bengal. The apex court said that it could not sit on appeal over the decisions of the judicial officers. When the counsel of the petitioners said the appeals are maintainable, the court agreed to hear it. On 24 February, SC allowed the deployment of West Bengal civil judges, in addition to 250 district judges, and the requisitioning of judicial officers from Jharkhand and Odisha to handle 80 lakh claims and objections of those facing deletion from the electoral roll. —*PTIW*

Around 63.66 lakh names have been deleted since the revision began in November, 2025, bringing down the voter base from about 7.66 crore to a little over 7.04 crore.

Over 60 lakh electors have been placed under the "under adjudication" category.

Kolkata Mayor and senior TMC leader Firhad Hakim alleged that the exercise had forced ordinary citizens to repeatedly prove their nationality.

Meanwhile, BJP demanded that the upcoming assembly elections be conducted in three phases, arguing that a prolonged polling schedule could facilitate the movement of anti-social elements.

It said that central forces deployed in relatively peaceful areas instead of sensitive locations.

The CPI(M) also demanded that the elections be conducted in a single phase. —*PTI*

Wouldn't let Saffron crowd swallow TN: Stalin

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI, 9 MARCH

In a scathing attack on the BJP, ruling DMK president and Chief Minister MK Stalin on Monday alleged that a "saffron crowd" wanted to "swallow" the southern state, but asserted his party would not allow that.

Addressing a mega party conference here, he also took on his rival, AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, accusing him of becoming a "slave" to the BJP in order to become CM.

DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, ex-TN CM M Karunanidhi's wife Rajathi Ammal meets CM MK Stalin & DyCM Udhayanidhi Stalin, in Chennai, —*PTI*

Further, with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar set to step down, he said that state never had a BJP CM, and that after winning polls by showcasing the JD (U) veteran, "now they have sidelined him".

A 'Saffron crowd,' an obvious reference to the BJP, wants to "swallow Tamil Nadu".

DMK will not allow it to happen, the CM asserted.

Turning to the party members he said "tell people, polls are all about TN vs NDA, 2026 polls is all about who is going to win.. for the Tamil Nadu team to emerge victorious request people to vote for the DMK and its allies," he said.

"This is the message you must take to the people during the next two months," Stalin added.

He said it will always be no-entry for NDA in Tamil Nadu, no-entry to NDA's dabba (dysfunctional) engine in the state.

Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin will rule Tamil Nadu, he asserted. —*PTI*

Kerala CPI MLA warns he will contest as Ind

THRISSUR, 8 MARCH

CPI's candidate selection process has entered rough weather with sitting Dalit MLA CC Mukundan from Nattika on Monday openly declaring that he would contest as an independent following reports that he was denied a party ticket for the upcoming Assembly elections.

The CPI has almost completed its selection of candidate for the 25 seats it contests as part of the LDF, according to reports. —PTI

US ENERGY SECY CLAIMS

'US told India to buy Russian oil already at sea'

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 9 MARCH

The US has urged India to buy Russian oil already floating at sea and redirect it to Indian refineries to "tamp down" fears of supply shortages and price spikes amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright has said.

However, the move, he said is a short-term, pragmatic effort to stabilise the market and did not signal any change in Washington's policy towards Russia.

In an interview to CNN on Sunday, Wright said he, along with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, had spoken to Indian authorities about buying Russian crude cargoes currently waiting to be unloaded at Chinese refineries.

Chris Wright —*PTI*

"India has been a great partner through this. I did call up the Indians, as did Treasury Secretary (Scott) Bessent, and said there's a whole bunch of oil floating waiting to unload at Chinese refineries.

"Instead of having it wait six weeks to unload there, let's just pull that oil forward, have it land in Indian refineries and tamp this fear of shortage of oil, tamp the price spikes and the concerns we see in the marketplace," he said.

However, the US policy towards Russia has not changed at all, Wright said, adding that "India is very clear on that".

Responding to a question on whether the Treasury Department's 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil amid the US-Israel war against Iran undermined the Trump administration's goal of isolating Moscow, he said, "It is not."

"It's just a pragmatic effort that has a short time span. No change in policy towards Russia," he said. —*PTI*

Govt's resolve is to fulfil people's aspirations: Modi

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** on Monday called for accelerating the process of linking the country's education sector to the real-world economy, while sharpening focus on subjects like artificial intelligence and automation.

Addressing a post-budget webinar, Modi also said that fulfilling aspirations of the people is the resolve of his government and education, skill development, health, tourism, sports and culture are some of the sectors that act as a medium to fulfil them. He said education, skill, health, tourism, sports, and culture are fundamental sectors and major means of fulfilling these aspirations. He said another major sector is STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics. He said the health sector has been strengthened, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Arogya Mandirs have led to greater penetration of health services in rural areas. —*PTI*

— PTI

JNUSU announces referendum on VC's removal

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) has announced a student referendum, which will be conducted on Tuesday, seeking the mandate of the students "on whether the vice chancellor should be removed." The referendum will be overseen by former members of the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA), and the results will be released on Wednesday. No response was immediately received from the JNU VC's office. JNU, as well as the university students' union, has recently been mired in controversies. The JNU campus witnessed protests after the university suspended four JNUSU office bearers for two semesters. — *PTI*

Ex-judge loses Rs 1 crore in digital arrest scam

HYDERABAD, 9 MARCH

A 69-year-old retired district judge in Hyderabad lost more than Rs one crore after falling victim to a 'digital arrest' scam. The cybercriminals threatened the judge, claiming his mobile number was involved in women trafficking and other offences. The victim, a resident of Malkajgiri in Hyderabad transferred the money before realising he had been duped. He lodged a complaint three days ago, and police have launched an investigation. Police explained that victims often get scared and fall prey to such scams. The fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials, falsely accuse individuals and extort money from them after threatening them with prosecution. —*PTI*

West Asia war: Gas crematoriums close down in Pune

LPG imports from GCC countries affected

PUNE, 9 MARCH

The Pune Municipal Corporation has temporarily closed the city's gas crematoriums due to restrictions on the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) components like propane and butane amid the West Asia conflict. LPG is a mixture of propane and butane.

The US-Israel war on Iran has disrupted oil and natural gas exports from West Asia.

The Pune civic body said the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas issued an order on 5 March directing that propane and butane should be prioritised for domestic LPG supply. In view of the gas shortage, the Pune Municipal Corporation has decided to keep its gas crematoriums closed from 5 March until further orders, a civic official said on Sunday.

Electric crematoriums and wood-fired facilities equipped with air pollution control systems will continue to function0, the official added.

At the Vaikunth crematorium in the city, three gas-fired furnaces will remain shut temporarily, while five electric furnaces at the facility will remain operational, the civic body said. — *PTI*

The Centre said priority must be given to domestic consumers while supplying Liquefied Petroleum Gas —*ANI*

Arvind Kejriwal —*PTI*

Manish Sisodia —*PTI*

Excise case: HC stays action against CBI

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Delhi High Court on Monday stayed a trial court recommendation for departmental action against a CBI investigating officer in the excise policy case and sought responses from former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and 22 others on the agency's petition challenging their discharge.

Issuing notice to all 23 accused, Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said certain observations made by the trial court while deciding on framing of charges "prima facie appear erroneous and need consideration". The court also stayed the trial court's "scathing remarks" against the Central Bureau of Investigation officer, including findings that he had abused his official position and conducted an unfair investigation.

The High Court said some factual discrepancies pointed out by the trial court, and its assessment of witness and approver statements at the stage of charge, required reconsideration in the light of settled legal principles on conspiracy and framing of charges.

The matter has been listed for hearing on March 16, with the court directing Kejriwal, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia and other accused to file their replies by then.

The court also directed the trial court to adjourn the connected money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate and await the outcome of the CBI's petition.

Appearing for the agency, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that the trial court's discharge order was perverse and "turned criminal law on its head". He alleged the case involved one of the biggest scams in the capital and said the CBI had gathered extensive evidence, including witness and approver statements, indicating conspiracy and bribery linked to the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. — *PTI*

2020 Delhi riots: Sharjeel gets 10-day bail

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

A court here on Monday granted 10-day interim bail to activist Sharjeel Imam, an accused in the 2020 Delhi riots case, for attending his brother's wedding.

Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai was hearing the interim bail application filed by Imam, seeking relief for six weeks to attend the marriage scheduled this month. In an order, the court granted interim bail from March 20 to 30.

Imam is an accused in the case pertaining to the February 2020 riots in Delhi that killed 53 people and injured around 700.

The violence erupted during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). — *PTI*

SC bins 5 'frivolous' PILs on Jain food

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Monday trashed five "frivolous" PILs filed by a lawyer, including one seeking a scientific study on whether onion and garlic contain "tamasic" (negative) energy, and asked if he drafted them in the middle of the night.

The bench, also comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, pulled up lawyer Sachin Gupta for filing a series of PILs.

One of the petitions sought directions to constitute a committee to research what constitutes "tamasic" or negative content in onion and garlic.

The petition referred to dietary practices of the Jain community, which traditionally avoids onion, garlic and root vegetables, considering them "tamasic."

"Why do you want to hurt the sentiments of the Jain community?" the CJI asked Gupta, who appeared in person.

The petitioner replied, saying that it is a common issue and claimed that a divorce allegedly took place in Gujarat over the use of onions in food.

Expressing strong displeasure, the CJI said, "Next time you come up with this kind of frivolous petitions, you will see what we will do." The bench also dismissed four other PILs filed by Gupta: one sought directions to regulate allegedly harmful content in alcohol and tobacco products, another sought directions to ensure mandatory registration of properties, while yet another sought guidelines on the declaration of classical languages.

The bench said the requests in the petitions were vague and lacked legal foundation.

The CJI said he would have imposed exemplary costs on the petitioner had he not been a lawyer. — *PTI*

Boy, 7 others held for Delhi Holi murder

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Delhi Police has arrested seven more people and a minor in connection with the killing of a 26-year-old man during a clash between two families on Holi in Delhi's Uttam Nagar, an official said on Monday.With the latest arrests, the number of people arrested in the case has increased to 14. Two minors have also been apprehended.

Those arrested now are three women, Sayra alias Kali, 40, Sharifan, 50, and Salma, 36, all residents of Uttam Nagar. They were taken into custody earlier for questioning in connection with the incident, a senior police officer said.

The others arrested are Suhail alias Sahil, 21, Sameer Chauhan, 20, Firoj, 22, and Ismile, 50, all residents of the same locality. A 14-year-old minor was also arrested, police said.

Police said Sayra alias Kali was the woman who allegedly started an argument when a young girl from the victim's family threw a water balloon which burst and splashed water on Kali who was passing by. — PTI

—ANI

Bihar cleric booked for remarks on Yogi's mother

BALRAMPUR, 9 MARCH

Maulana Abdul Salim from Bihar has been booked for allegedly making objectionable remarks about Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's mother. An FIR was filed on 7 March at Balrampur's Nagar Kotwali police station, based on a complaint by BJP district president Ravi Mishra. Salim is accused of making inflammatory comments during a religious gathering, attempting to incite the minority community against cow slaughter laws. The remarks led to protests across Balrampur and Lucknow, with BJP workers demanding strict legal action. BJP MP Ravi Kishan condemned the comments, emphasising respect for motherhood as a symbol of Indian culture. —*PTI*

India-Seychelles military exercise 'Lamitiye' starts

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Indian armed forces are participating in a joint exercise with Seychelles from 9-20 March. Conducted at the Seychelles Defence Academy, this exercise involves personnel from the Assam Regiment, the Indian Navy (including INS Trikand), and the Indian Air Force (C-130 aircraft). The 12-day event aims to enhance cooperation, interoperability, and joint training in semi-urban environments, peacekeeping, and counter-threat operations. The exercise, named Lamitiye meaning 'friendship' in Creole, has been held since 2001. It will include tactical drills, discussions, demonstrations, and a final validation, strengthening bilateral military relations. —*PTI*

ORDER TODAY ON COUPLE'S BAIL IN RACIAL SLUR CASE

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

A Delhi court on Monday reserved its order on the bail plea of a married couple accused of hurling racial slurs at their neighbours from Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

Additional Sessions Judge Samar Vishal heard the arguments of both parties on Monday and reserved the order for Tuesday.

The accused, Harsh Priya Singh and Ruby Jain, were arrested on 25 February 25 by the Delhi Police for allegedly hurling racial slurs at the three north eastern women.

The counsel for the accused, advocate Gaurav, argued that the case was merely a spontaneous dispute between two neighbours, where both parties used derogatory remarks.

It was not a case of racial discrimination that attracted the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, as the accused were not aware that the complainants were tribal, he said

He also argued the dispute occurred in their apartment complex, which is not a "public place" as per the essential ingredients of an offence under Section 3 of the SC/ST Act.

He also submitted that the Police Control Room (PCR) call was made by the accused themselves, as they felt intimidated by the complainants.

Gaurav said that evidence related to the incident had been seized by the police, and the accused had earlier joined the investigation on their own volition before their arrest, and so there is no need for further custodial interrogation.

He also alleged that the medical condition of accused Ruby Jain has deteriorated in jail as her treatment regime has been interrupted. — *PTI*

Manipuri woman beaten up by boys in racist attack at Delhi park

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

A Manipuri woman has alleged that she was beaten with a belt and attacked with a knife after she objected to sexual and racial remarks by a group of boys in a south Delhi park.

The police apprehended four juveniles in connection with the incident that took place on Sunday evening Malviya Nagar. The woman and her friend had gone to the park for a walk and were taking pictures when around six to seven boys started harassing them with sexual slurs, the police said.

"When we objected, the group called us 'prostitutes,' made racist remarks and used abusive Hindi slang," the woman said.

She alleged that the situation quickly escalated into violence. "They started assaulting me. They did not stop even after beating me."

She said that one of the attackers took out a knife and attempted to stab her, forcing her to run away.

"When I fell running, they took an iron belt and hit me on the back of my head, causing bleeding in my right ear," she said.

The woman alleged that she and her friend begged the attackers to stop, but the assault continued.

The woman said she had never seen the attackers before.

The local SHO and other staff rushed to the spot and met the injured woman after a distress call, the police said. — *PTI*

UP man, his son found motionless inside house

BALLIA, 9 MARCH

A father and son were found unconscious in their house, which had been locked for three days in Sahatwar in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia.

Sonu, 35, was later declared dead by the doctors while his father, Ashok, 61, is being treated. Both were habitual drinkers, police said.

As the house was closed for three days, on 8 March neighbours informed the relatives of the house owner. SHO Anil Singh said that when the relatives arrived, they found the door locked from the inside and alerted the police. The police broke open the door and found Sonu and Ashok unconscious. Police sent Sonu's body for autopsy. An investigation into the matter is underway. — *PTI*

Kerala Min Ganesh's wife alleges infidelity

T-PURAM, 9 MARCH

Kerala Transport Minister KB Ganesh Kumar's wife on Monday levelled allegations of infidelity against him after he denied the rumours circulating on social media regarding the matter. Bindhu Menon said there had been problems with Ganesh Kumar since their marriage in 2014.

The Kerala Congress (B) leader married Menon in 2014 after separating from Yamini Thankachy.

She said a dispute occurred in 2019 and that she had sought the assistance of BJP leader R Sreelekha, who is her relative.

Menon said she had been living separately for the past several months because of Ganesh's relationship with other women. "I used to fight with him over several women. Then my phones were tracked and allegations were raised against me of having affairs with my friends," she said.

She alleged that Kumar blocked her phone. She said that after learning about what was happening at Kumar's house in Valakom, she contacted many women and warned them.

She said she wanted closure in their relationship and went to the Valakom house to know what was happening there. — *PTI*

WORLDWIDE NETWORK

Reptile smuggling gang's chief arrested

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Madhya Pradesh State Tiger Strike Force, in a coordinated operation with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, has arrested one Tarak Nath Ghosh, the kingpin of a reptile smuggling racket from Kanpur, officials said on Monday.

The accused, wanted in three cases of transnational illegal trade in turtles and gharials registered in Madhya Pradesh, had been absconding for eight years.

Arrest warrants had been issued against him by three different courts.

"Ghosh's syndicate is spread across several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal. He is also suspected to have a network outside India, including in Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar and Singapore," an official statement by the Ministry of Environment said.

The accused will be produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri on Monday.

"Police or forest custody remand will be sought to obtain further information and intelligence about his alleged network," the statement said. — *PTI*

The accused is wanted in three cases of transnational illegal trade in turtles and gharials registered in Madhya Pradesh —*ANI*

- The accused, Tarak Nath Ghosh, wanted in many cases had been absconding for 8 years

Five cheetah cubs born at Kuno National Park

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Namibian cheetah Jwala on Monday gave birth to five cubs at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, taking the country's cheetah population to 53, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced. The development comes days after cheetah Gamini gave birth to four cubs at the same park.

"A moment of great pride for Project Cheetah as Jwala, the Namibian Cheetah and a successful third-time mother, gave birth to five cubs today at the Kuno National Park. With this, the number of Indian-born thriving cubs has risen to 33, marking the 10th successful cheetah litter on Indian soil -- another important milestone in India's cheetah conservation journey," Yadav said on X. — *PTI*

A cheetah named Jwala rests with her cubs after giving birth at the Kuno National Park, in MP —*PTI*

Will Iran's new leader bring change or suppression?

Mojtaba Khamenei was often seen as a gatekeeper and powerbroker rather than a public political figure with a formal portfolio —*WIKIMEDIA COMMONS*

The death of Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, during the holy month of Ramadan marks one of the most consequential turning points in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

His successor, his son Mojtaba Khamenei, represents both continuity and contradiction in the revolutionary system established after the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

At stake is not only who leads Iran, but what the Islamic Republic has become, nearly half a century after the revolution that promised an end to dynastic rule.

WHO IS MOJTABA KHAMENEI?

Mojtaba Khamenei is a cleric who has spent most of his career outside public office but close to power, working within the Office of the Supreme Leader. He was often seen as a gatekeeper and powerbroker rather than a public political figure with a formal portfolio.

At 17, he briefly served in the Iran–Iraq war. He only began attracting public attention in the late 1990s, by which time his father's authority as supreme leader was firmly established.

Over time, his reputation has centred on two key features. The first is a close relationship with Iran's security establishment, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and its hardline networks.

The second is a strong opposition to reformist politics and Western engagement.

Critics have linked him to the suppression of protests following the disputed 2009 presidential election.

In 2019, the first Trump administration sanctioned Mojtaba, accusing him of acting in an official capacity on behalf of the supreme leader despite holding no formal government position.

MOJTABA'S LEGITIMACY AS A LEADER

Iran's constitution dictates that the Assembly of Experts (an 88-member clerical body) selects the supreme leader.

The assembly lists the religious, political and leadership qualifications of possible candidates. But in practice, it is not a neutral electoral body. Candidates for the assembly itself are vetted through institutions ultimately shaped by the supreme leader's orbit, and its deliberations are opaque.

This creates a familiar Iranian scenario – the constitution supplies the choreography, while the security-clerical establishment supplies the music.

That matters when assessing why Mojtaba is seen as a viable supreme leader amid critiques that he lacks the senior religious standing traditionally associated with the office.

A mid-ranking cleric, he was only given the title ayatollah in 2022. The title is necessary to become the supreme leader, so the promotion signalled he was being groomed to take over from his ageing and ill father.

The revolution's founding myth was clearly anti-dynastic. After toppling the shah, the revolution's leaders rejected hereditary rule.

To many Iranians, a son following his father as supreme leader looks like an ideological backslide. The regime appears more like a theocratic monarchy, less the famous "guardianship of the jurist".

Yet, it is also important to be precise. Mojtaba cannot inherit the position by bloodline alone. The assembly must select him.

Still, political systems can become dynastic without rewriting constitutions. Dynastic outcomes emerge when informal power networks, such as family ties, political patronage, security ties, and control over the media, can make one candidate appear more natural, safe or inevitable.

That has essentially been the Mojtaba story in Iran for years: a man who built influence not by winning elections, but by managing the gate to the most powerful office in the country.

The circumstances of Ali Khamenei's death add another layer of significance and, ironically, legitimacy to Mojtaba's ascension.

For many Shi'a Muslims, being killed during Ramadan carries deep symbolic resonance. The first imam of Shi'ism, Ali ibn Abi Talib, was assassinated during the dawn prayer in Ramadan in 661 CE, an event still commemorated each year by Shi'ite Muslims.

Shi'ite historical memory places strong emphasis on martyrdom. In particular, the death of Husayn ibn Ali, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at Karbala in 680 CE, symbolises the struggle between justice and oppression.

Because of this tradition, violent deaths of leaders in the past and today are framed within a broader narrative of sacrifice and resistance.

Iran's revolutionary ideology has long drawn on these themes. If the state presents Khamenei's death in this light, it could strengthen a narrative of martyrdom and defiance.

This, in turn, gives his son Mojtaba an aura of religious legitimacy that is very strong in the Shi'ite Muslim psyche.

HOW DIFFERENT WOULD HE BE FROM HIS FATHER?

This is the most consequential question for Iran. The answer is likely less different than many might expect.

Ali Khamenei was a figure of the revolutionary generation. His authority rested on ideological legitimacy, decades spent amassing and consolidating power, and his ability to arbitrate between competing factions. Over time, he became the system's final referee. Mojtaba Khamenei, by contrast, is often portrayed as a product of the security establishment, rather than a public theologian or statesman. He is known less for speeches or religious authority than for his influence and the networks he has built behind the scenes for coordination.

If that assessment is correct, the shift would be from a leader who balanced institutions to one who may lean more heavily on the IRGC's might. This would deepen an existing trend toward the securitisation of Iranian politics.

In a period of war and instability, regimes typically prioritise continuity and control. Mojtaba's appeal to the establishment, therefore, appears to rest on several factors:

- His close ties to the IRGC and intelligence networks
- His long experience inside the supreme leader's office
- His ideological alignment with hardline positions sceptical of reform and Western engagement.

A figure trusted by the most powerful security institutions also reduces the chance of power struggles or fragmentation at the top.

WHAT MIGHT THIS MEAN FOR THE WAR?

A new supreme leader rarely produces an abrupt ideological shift, especially during a military conflict. Continuity is the more likely outcome.

Mojtaba Khamenei's profile suggests a more security-centred style of leadership with three possible ways forward.

First, domestic control may harden. Second, the IRGC could expand its influence in regional affairs, given how closely aligned Mojtaba is with the guards. Third, any negotiations with the West would likely be tactical rather than transformative. And given the fact that his father was killed in US-Israeli airstrikes, this will only reinforce a harder line posture toward both countries.In short, Iran under Mojtaba Khamenei would likely remain confrontational in rhetoric, but pragmatic when regime survival is at stake. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Hormuz closure may spark fertiliser shock, food risks

Tehran is moving to restrict – or effectively close – the Strait of Hormuz to shipping, as part of the latest escalation in the war involving Iran.

Markets have reacted to the global impact of closing this incredibly busy shipping channel, focusing on the risk to oil and gas flows, the prospect of higher crude prices and the inflationary pressures that would follow.

A sustained disruption of traffic through Hormuz would not simply constitute an energy crisis.

It would also represent a fertiliser shock (where prices rise sharply and supply declines) – and, by extension, a direct risk to global food security.

Modern agriculture runs not only on sunlight and soil, but on natural gas. When German chemists Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch developed their nitrogen fixation method in the early 20th century, they did more than just manufacture ammonia at scale.

They launched a global chemical revolution that remains a cornerstone of modern civilisation and agriculture. Through this process, methane is transformed into ammonia, and ammonia into nitrogen fertilisers such as urea.

Those fertilisers allow crops to reach the yields on which today's global population depends. Without it, harvests of wheat, maize and rice would fall dramatically.

Around a third of globally traded urea passes through the Strait of Hormuz. The Persian Gulf sits at the centre of this system for two structural reasons. First, it offers access to some of the world's cheapest natural gas, essential for ammonia production.

Second, over decades, vast capital investments have built ammonia and urea capacity in countries within the region, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

A significant share of globally traded nitrogen fertiliser – and the liquefied natural gas (LNG) that powers fertiliser plants elsewhere – must therefore travel through the Strait of Hormuz.

The immediate effect would be delays to shipments of ammonia, urea and LNG. But the deeper impact would unfold in the months ahead at farms around the world.

In the northern hemisphere, fertiliser purchases accelerate before planting seasons. A delay of weeks can be disruptive; a disruption of months can make a huge difference.

If shipments fail to arrive on time, farmers face difficult choices, such as paying sharply higher prices, reducing application rates, or altering crop mixes. Because of how crops respond, even modest reductions in nitrogen use can produce disproportionately large declines in yield.

That could translate into millions of tonnes of lost crops. The consequences would ripple through global supply chains into feed markets, livestock production, biofuels and ultimately retail food prices.

DO COUNTRIES NOT HAVE THEIR OWN SUPPLIES?

Some countries have fertiliser supplies, but self-sufficiency is rarer than it appears.

India, for instance, relies heavily on LNG imports from the Persian Gulf to run its domestic urea plants. Brazil depends substantially on imported nitrogen and phosphate fertilisers to sustain soybean and maize production.

Even the US, one of the world's largest fertiliser producers, imports meaningful volumes of ammonia and urea to help meet regional demand and reduce prices. In sub-Saharan Africa, the use of fertiliser is already low. A further rise in prices is likely to reduce use even more, cutting yields and increasing food insecurity.

The system's fragility extends beyond nitrogen. Sulphur – as an essential nutrient for plant growth – is largely a byproduct of oil and gas processing. If energy shipments through Hormuz are disrupted, sulphur output falls alongside fuel exports.

Meanwhile, the production of synthetic nitrogen is tightly coupled to energy markets because it is manufactured continuously from natural gas. A disruption in gas supply or ammonia trade immediately constrains global nitrogen availability.

Estimates suggest that without synthetic nitrogen, the world could feed only a fraction of its current population. The Strait of Hormuz, therefore, sits at the intersection of energy and food security.

Changing where fertiliser is produced cannot happen overnight. Financing and constructing new ammonia plants takes years.

In the interim, prices would rise, trade flows would re-route, and planting decisions would be made under uncertainty. Food price inflation, historically correlated with social unrest, could intensify.

Central banks, focused primarily on fuel-driven inflation, could underestimate the contribution of fertiliser scarcity to overall price increases. Crucially, fertiliser shocks do not register with the same immediacy as oil shocks. Petrol prices change overnight. Crop yields reveal themselves months later. Yet the latter may prove more destabilising.

If the 20th century taught policymakers to fear oil embargoes, the 21st should teach them to fear a fertiliser shock.

Energy markets can absorb shocks through reserves and substitution.

But the global food system has far thinner buffers. A prolonged disruption at Hormuz would not simply reprice crude; it would test the resilience of the industrial nitrogen cycle on which modern civilisation depends. —*PTI*

Modern agriculture runs not only on sunlight and soil, but also on natural gas —*PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Oil and desalinated water built Persian Gulf, but war threatens both

- Hundreds of desalination plants sit along the Persian Gulf coast, putting individual systems that supply water to millions within range of Iranian missile or drone strikes. Without them, major cities could not sustain their current populations.

As missiles and drones curtail energy production across the Persian Gulf, analysts warn that water, not oil, may be the resource most at risk in the energy-rich but arid region.

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In Kuwait, about 90 per cent of drinking water comes from desalination, roughly 86 per cent in Oman, and about 70 per cent in Saudi Arabia. The technology removes salt from seawater — most commonly by pushing it through ultrafine membranes in a process known as reverse osmosis — to produce the freshwater that sustains cities, hotels, industry and some agriculture across one of the world's driest regions.

For people living outside West Asia, the main concern of the Iran war has been the impact on energy prices. The Gulf produces about a third of the world's crude exports, and energy revenues underpin national economies. Fighting has already halted tanker traffic through key shipping routes and disrupted port activity, forcing some producers to curb exports as storage tanks fill.

But the infrastructure that keeps Gulf cities supplied with drinking water may be equally vulnerable.

EARLY SIGNS OF RISK

The war that began 28 February, with US and Israeli attacks on Iran has already brought fighting close to key desalination infrastructure. On 2 March, Iranian strikes on Dubai's Jebel Ali port landed some 12 miles from one of the world's largest desalination plants, which produces much of the city's drinking water.

Damage was also reported at the Fujairah F1 power and water complex in the United Arab Emirates, and at Kuwait's Doha West desalination plant. The damage at the two facilities appeared to have resulted from nearby port attacks or debris from intercepted drones.

On Sunday, Bahrain accused Iran of indiscriminately attacking civilian targets and damaging one of its desalination plants, though it didn't say supplies have gone offline.

Earlier, Iran said a US airstrike damaged an Iranian desalination plant. Abbas Araghchi, the country's foreign minister, said the strike on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had cut into the water supply for 30 villages.

In Kuwait, about 90 per cent of drinking water comes from desalination, roughly 86 per cent in Oman, and about 70 per cent in Saudi Arabia —*PTI*

He warned that in doing so "the US set this precedent, not Iran."

Many Gulf desalination plants are physically integrated with power stations as cogeneration facilities, meaning attacks on electrical infrastructure could also hinder water production. Even where plants are connected to national grids with backup supply routes, disruptions can cascade across interconnected systems, said David Michel, senior fellow for water security at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

A LONG-STANDING CONCERN

Gulf governments and US officials have long recognised the risks these systems pose for regional stability: if major desalination plants were knocked offline, some cities could lose most of their drinking water within days. A 2010 CIA analysis warned attacks on desalination facilities could trigger national crises in several Gulf states, and prolonged outages could last months if critical equipment were destroyed.

More than 90 per cent of the Gulf's desalinated water comes from just 56 plants, the report stated, and "each of these critical plants is extremely vulnerable to sabotage or military action."

A leaked 2008 US diplomatic cable warned the Saudi capital of Riyadh "would have to evacuate within a week" if either the Jubail desalination plant on the Gulf coast or its pipelines or associated power infrastructure were seriously damaged.

Saudi Arabia has since invested in pipeline networks, storage reservoirs and other redundancies designed to cushion short-term disruptions, as has the UAE. But smaller states such as Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait have fewer backup supplies.

THE THREAT IS NOT HYPOTHETICAL

During Iraq's 1990-1991 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War, Iraqi forces sabotaged power stations and desalination facilities as they retreated, said the University of Utah's Low.

At the same time, millions of barrels of crude oil were deliberately released into the Persian Gulf, creating one of the largest oil spills in history.

The destruction left Kuwait largely without fresh water and dependent on emergency water imports. Full recovery took years.

The incidents underscore a broader erosion of long-standing norms against attacking civilian infrastructure, Michel said, noting conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and Iraq.

International humanitarian law, including provisions of the Geneva Conventions, prohibits targeting civilian infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the population, including drinking water facilities.

IRAN'S OWN WATER SUPPLY AT RISK

After a fifth year of extreme drought, water levels in Tehran's five reservoirs plunged to some 10 per cent of their capacity, prompting President Masoud Pezeshkian to warn the capital may have to be evacuated.

Unlike many Gulf states that rely heavily on desalination, Iran still gets most of its water from rivers, reservoirs and depleted underground aquifers.

The country operates a relatively small number of desalination plants, supplying only a fraction of national demand.

Iran is racing to expand desalination along its southern coast and pump some of the water inland, but infrastructure constraints, energy costs and international sanctions have sharply limited scalability. —*PTI*

— JAPAN DEFENCE MINISTRY

Japan to deploy 1st home grown long-range missile

TOKYO, 9 MARCH

Japan is set to deploy its first domestically developed long-range missile, with launchers arriving at Camp Kengun in Kumamoto. The upgraded Type-12 land-to-ship missile, developed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, will be operational by the end of March. It has a range of about 1,000km, enough to reach mainland China, a significant increase from the original 200km. The deployment follows Japan's accelerated military build-up due to regional tensions, especially with China around Taiwan. The missile's deployment at Camp Fuji in Shizuoka is scheduled later this year. Japan considers China a security threat and is expanding its military presence on southwestern islands. Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi announced plans to deploy midrange surface-to-air missiles by 2031, amid rising regional tensions. —*PTI*

US kills six in Eastern Pacific drug boat strike

WASHINGTON, 9 MARCH

The US military announced it killed six men on Sunday in a strike targeting an alleged drug-smuggling vessel in the Eastern Pacific, as part of its anti-trafficking campaign. This attack brings the total deaths to at least 157 since September, targeting suspected traffickers along known routes. The military did not confirm the vessel was carrying drugs but released a video showing the boat being destroyed. President Donald Trump claimed the US is in "armed conflict" with Latin American cartels, justifying the strikes. Critics question legality and effectiveness, noting that most fentanyl enters the US via land from Mexico. The strikes have also faced criticism for killing survivors of initial attacks, with some calling it murder or war crimes. —*PTI*

Five killed as Indonesia's largest landfill collapses

JAKARTA, 9 MARCH

Heavy rain triggered a collapse at Indonesia's largest landfill, killing at least five and leaving several missing. Rescuers, police, soldiers, and volunteers, deployed over 300 personnel to the Bantargebang dump near Jakarta. Victims included two garbage truck drivers and two food stall sellers. Four others escaped, but search efforts continue for at least three missing persons. Photos showed excavators working through debris, with warnings about further ground movement due to unstable waste heaps. The site, already overwhelmed, is under pressure from ongoing capacity issues. Indonesia has previously experienced similar disasters, with a 2005 collapse killing 31. The government plans a two-year project to convert waste into energy to reduce reliance on open dumping. —*PTI*

US says 'WTF' as Israel bombs Iran's oil depots

US official says Trump wants to save oil, not burn it

Flames rise from an oil storage facility near Tehran during the US and Israel military campaign in Iran on Saturday —*PTI*

WASHINGTON/ TEL AVIV, 9 MARCH

US officials were reportedly taken aback by Israel's large-scale strikes on Iranian fuel depots, with one Israeli official saying the White House sent a "WTF (what the f***)" message, in the first major disagreement between the allies since the war began.

According to US and Israeli officials, Israel informed the US military in advance of Saturday's attacks, but Washington was surprised by the scale. Israeli air strikes hit around 30 fuel depots, triggering massive fires in Tehran and blanketing the capital in thick smoke.

"We don't think it was a good idea," a senior US official said, expressing concern that targeting infrastructure used by civilians could backfire by rallying public support for the regime and driving up global oil prices.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) defended the operation, saying the fuel depots were used by the Iranian military. An Israeli military official said the strikes were also meant to warn Tehran against targeting Israeli civilian infrastructure.

US officials said the facilities were not oil production sites but warned that burning fuel depots could spook global energy markets. "The president doesn't like the attack. He wants to save the oil," a Trump adviser said.

Iran warned it could retaliate by targeting energy infrastructure across the region. A spokesman for the Khatam al-Anbiya military headquarters said Iran had so far avoided striking regional fuel facilities.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf also warned that Tehran would respond "without delay" if attacks on infrastructure continued.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said any decision on ending the conflict would be made jointly with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I think it's mutual... I'll make a decision at the right time," he said in an interview with The Times of Israel.

Trump claimed the intervention had prevented Iran from destroying Israel and said weakening Tehran could also force groups such as Hamas to disarm. —*Salar News*

APOCALYPTIC: IT IS RAINING OIL IN TEHRAN

Oil-saturated raindrops reportedly fell over Tehran on Sunday morning hours after Israeli strikes hit oil facilities in and around the city. Residents said the smell of burning lingered in the air, with many reporting it remained dark even after sunrise as rain fell through black clouds. Some said the rainfall appeared mixed with oil. Authorities urged people to remain indoors amid fears of toxic "acid rain". Residents described the morning gloom as "apocalyptic", switching on lights as smoke blotted out the sun. Iran's environmental authorities warned of respiratory risks, while the Iranian Red Crescent said the explosions released "toxic hydrocarbon compounds, sulphur and nitrogen oxides" into the atmosphere. "In the event of precipitation, the resulting rain is dangerous and highly acidic," it said, warning of skin burns and severe lung damage. Videos shared by citizens showed massive flames lighting up the night sky and smoke billowing from oil storage facilities. —*PTI*

BAHRAIN'S ONLY OIL COMPANY SHUTS AFTER IRAN ATTACK

An attack by Iran appears to have started a fire in Bahrain's only oil refinery. The state-run factory declared force majeure on Monday for its shipments after an Iranian attack set its refinery ablaze, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air. Force majeure is a legal manoeuvre that releases a company from its contractual obligations because the company's operations "have been affected by the ongoing regional conflict in West Asia and the recent attack on its refinery complex." However, it insisted that local demand could still be met. Bahrain also accused Iran of damaging a desalination plant, although authorities stated that water and electricity supplies remain unaffected. —*PTI*

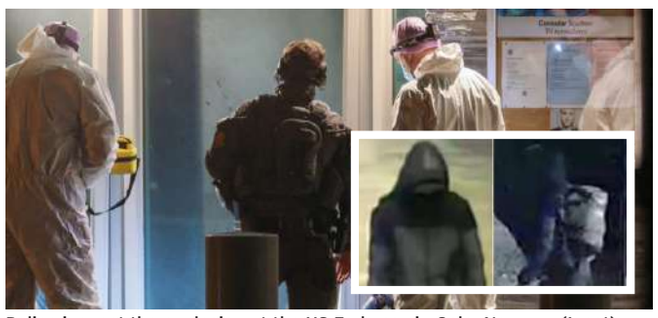
WEST ASIA WAR DAY-10

ISRAEL ACCUSED OF USING WHITE PHOSPHORUS IN LEBANON

Human Rights Watch said in a report on Monday that the Israeli military "unlawfully" struck the southern Lebanese village of Yohmor with artillery shells containing white phosphorus. Using white phosphorus in populated areas is illegal under international law. The substance causes excruciating burns to the bone, respiratory failure, and organ damage — even from minor exposure. The group said it verified images and geolocated the attack, which hit residential areas hours after the Israeli military warned residents to evacuate. Human Rights Watch said it wasn't able to independently verify whether any residents remained in the area or if anyone has been harmed. —*PTI*

Amid war, Europe tense after attacks

BRUSSELS/BEIRUT, 9 MARCH



Police inspect the explosion at the US Embassy in Oslo, Norway; (Inset) Norway police released CCTV footage of the suspect —*NORWAY POLICE*

European countries are tightening security after explosions near a synagogue in Belgium and the US Embassy in Norway.

Belgian Interior Minister Bernard Quintin described an overnight blast near a synagogue in the eastern city of Liege as a "despicable antisemitic act". Police said the explosion occurred early on Monday, damaging windows of a nearby building but causing no injuries.

Federal prosecutors are investigating the incident as a possible terrorist offence, while the area remained cordoned off for forensic checks. Belgium, France and Germany have announced enhanced security measures due to the conflict, while insisting they are not directly involved alongside the US and Israel.

Belgium's transport minister called for stronger security across the rail network.

In Norway, police in Oslo are analysing surveillance footage after an explosion outside the US Embassy early Sunday. Authorities said a loud blast occurred around 1 am, damaging the embassy entrance but causing no injuries.

Investigators believe an improvised explosive was placed at the entrance. Police released an image of a suspect wearing dark clothes, a backpack and facial covering.

Amid rising tensions, French President Emmanuel Macron travelled to Cyprus after deploying the frigate Languedoc to waters near the island to strengthen anti-drone and missile defences.

France is also sending ground-based defence systems after a Shahed drone struck a British base in Cyprus last week. Macron is meeting Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis,

Meanwhile, Lebanon's parliament voted to extend its term by two years citing the war and escalating Israeli attacks. Seventy-six MPs backed the move, with Hezbollah's bloc supporting it, as more than half a million people have been displaced ahead of planned elections.

Israel carried out fresh airstrikes in Beirut's southern suburbs targeting Hezbollah-linked financial sites. The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel.

Meanwhile, Iraq downed a drone targeting a US military compound at Baghdad airport, while Turkey said NATO intercepted a missile entering its airspace. The US has ordered nonessential staff to leave Saudi Arabia.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington was "well on our way" to eliminating Iran's missile threat, while Germany's Friedrich Merz said it was up to Iran to stop the fighting. —*PTI*

INVESTIGATION PROVES US STRUCK IRANIAN SCHOOL, KILLING 165

JERUSALEM, 9 MARCH

The investigative group Bellingcat says a newly released video "appears to contradict" US President Donald Trump's claim that Iran was responsible for an explosion on 28 February at an Iranian school that killed over 165 people during the start of the West Asia conflict.

Evidence continues to mount regarding US culpability for the strike on the school. Trevor Ball, a Bellingcat researcher, identified the munition as a Tomahawk cruise missile, which only the US possess. The video shared by Bellingcat shows a munition falling on a building, sending a dark plume into the air that mingles with smoke that likely came from earlier strikes on the compound. Ball geolocated the video to a site near the school, which was also confirmed by AP.

Complicating any assessment of the incident is the lack of images of bomb fragments from the blast. No independent agency has reached the site during the war to investigate the matter.

When asked on Saturday if the US was responsible for the blast that killed children, Trump said, without evidence: "No. Based on what I've seen, that was done by Iran." —*PTI*

US-S KOREA HOLD MILITARY DRILL AMID WEST ASIA WAR

SEOUL, 9 MARCH

The US began a large military exercise with South Korea involving thousands of troops on Monday while also waging an escalating war in West Asia .

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff has said about 18,000 Korean troops will take part in Freedom Shield, which runs through March 19. US Forces Korea has not confirmed the number of American troops participating in the training in South Korea.

The allies' combined exercise comes amid South Korean media speculation that Washington is relocating some military assets from South Korea to support fighting against Iran. —*PTI*

Friend or foe? Don talks to Starmer, Carney

LONDON/ TORONTO, 9 MARCH

— X

US President **Donald Trump** and UK Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** have spoken for the first time since Trump sharply criticised Britain's response to the escalating conflict involving Iran.

Downing Street gave limited details of the call, saying the two leaders discussed the war.

Trump had earlier dismissed reports that Britain was considering sending aircraft carriers to the region. Posting on Truth Social, he wrote that while the UK, "our once great ally, maybe the greatest of them all", was thinking of deploying two carriers, the US no longer needed them."

The remarks came after the UK Ministry of Defence confirmed that HMS Prince of Wales had been placed on advanced readiness, with its crew in Portsmouth told to be ready to deploy within days.

Four Typhoon jets have arrived in Qatar, while HMS Dragon is set to sail to the Mediterranean to strengthen air defence around in Cyprus.

CARNEY WEIGHS OPTIONS

Canadian Prime Minister **Mark Carney** has also held discussions with Trump on the crisis. Last week, Carney said he could not rule out Canadian military involvement, though he described such a scenario as "hypothetical".

Speaking in Canberra with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Carney said Canada would "stand by our allies" and "always defend Canadians". While noting that the US-Israeli strikes on Iran were "inconsistent with international law", he said he supported the action "with regret", calling it an "extreme example of rupturing world order". —*AGENCIES*

Epstein files: Andrew seen with woman in new photo

LONDON, 9 MARCH

A man who looks like Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor with a young woman on his lap —*PTI*

A recent photograph released in files linked to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein appears to show a man resembling former prince Andrew sitting with a young woman on his lap. According to The Daily Telegraph, the photo is said to have been taken inside Epstein's residence in New York City.

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, who was stripped of his royal titles last year, was arrested in February 2026 on suspicion of misconduct in public based on Epstein files. He denies all allegations.

Amid the fallout from her father's legal crisis, Princess Eugenie has since stepped down from the Anti-Slavery International, the world's oldest human rights organisation. Eugenie is also a potential witness in his defence.

Princess Eugenie is a potential witness in her father's defence for the night he allegedly slept with Virginia Giuffre in March 2001, claiming he "was at home with the children". Giuffre, who died in 2025, had long alleged she was paid USD 15,000 to have sex with Andrew during a visit to London.

In January, attorney Brad Edwards said, a second victim claimed she was trafficked to the UK in 2010. —*AGENCIES*

ROMPS HOME IN POLLS

Nepal's RSP wins 124 seats

KATHMANDU, 9 MARCH

Balendra Shah of RSP after winning the constituency in the Nepal general election —*PTI*

The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is heading towards a two-thirds majority in Nepal's parliamentary polls, securing 124 seats under direct voting and over 40 lakh votes under the proportionate-voting system as on Monday morning.

The RSP has won 124 seats under direct voting and is leading in one, whereas the Nepali Congress (NC) has won 17 seats.

The CPN-UML has won eight seats, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) seven, and the Shram Sanskriti Party (SSP) three, while the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and an Independent candidate have won one seat each.

So far, the results for 161 of the 165 seats have been declared under direct voting. Under proportionate voting, the RSP has secured 4049,604 votes, followed by the NC at 13,60,281, the CPN-UML 1150,679, the NCP 591,940, the Shram Sanskriti Party 291,965, the Janata Samajwadi Party 1,16,463 and the Rastriya Parivartan Party 276,931.

With more than 40 lakh votes under the proportional representation system, the RSP is expected to secure at least 40 additional seats, taking its tally to around 164 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives, which is well above the 138 needed for a simple majority, political observers said.

Nepal is set to witness its first Madhesi prime minister -- Balendra Shah -- who will also be the youngest elected executive head in the history of the Himalayan country.

Fourteen women have been elected to Nepal's parliament, accounting for just over eight per cent of the total seats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with RSP's leader and Shah over telephone on Monday to convey India's commitment to work together for mutual prosperity. —*PTI*

Anthropic sues Pentagon over nat'l security blacklist

CHICAGO, 9 MARCH

Anthropic has filed two lawsuits against the Trump administration to overturn the Pentagon's designation of the AI as a "supply chain risk." The legal action follows Anthropic's refusal to grant the military unrestricted access to its AI technology.

The Pentagon last week formally designated the tech company a "supply chain risk" after an unusually public dispute over how its AI chatbot Claude could be used in warfare.

Anthropic aims to prohibit its AI from being used for mass surveillance of US citizens and the development of autonomous weapons.

However, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth demanded the company permit "all lawful uses" of its Claude models, threatening punitive actions.

ANTHROPIC — THE PENTAGON

"These actions are unprecedented and unlawful," Anthropic's lawsuit says. "The Constitution does not allow the government to wield its power to punish a company for its protected speech.

US President Donald Trump plans to order federal agencies to stop using Claude, though he gave the Pentagon six months to phase out the product as it is deeply embedded in classified military systems, including in the current Iran war.

As well as earlier, in capture of Venezuela's then president Nicolas Maduro. —*Agencies*

'Iran conflict can strain emerging mkt sovereigns'

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the Iran conflict could raise additional challenges for some emerging market sovereigns in areas like energy imports, remittances and exchange rates. In a report titled 'Iran conflict raises new credit risks for emerging market sovereigns', the provider of credit ratings said more sustained disruption to global energy supplies from the Gulf than envisaged under its baseline could significantly damage global investor sentiment. Fitch said oil and gas imports are the most direct channel for contagion from the conflict, given its effect on global energy prices. For larger economies, like India, net fossil fuel imports are equivalent to 3 per cent or more of GDP. *—PTI*

Sebi reviewing Calcutta Stock Exchange exit plea

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is currently examining the application from the Calcutta Stock Exchange (CSE) seeking voluntary exit, said Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in Parliament. Chaudhary revealed that SEBI has formed a Working Group and appointed a valuation agency for verifying CSE's assets and liabilities. Some information requested by SEBI remains pending. He stated that SEBI would issue a detailed order, considering the assets, liabilities, and regulatory relaxations, to facilitate CSE's exit. The exchange wrote to SEBI on 18 February, 2025, seeking voluntary exit under the Sebi Exit Policy. Trading on CSE's platform was halted in April 2013. *—PTI*

RBI injects ₹50,000 cr durable liquidity in banking system

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday injected Rs 50,000 crore into the banking system through Open Market Operation (OMO) purchases of government securities, according to a release.

The Central bank purchased 6.33 per cent Government Security (GS) 2035 bonds worth Rs 13,507 crore, 6.01 per cent GS 2030 worth Rs 13,494 crore, 6.10 per cent GS 2031 of Rs 8,157 crore, 7.30 per cent GS 2053 of Rs 6,955 crore, 7.18 per cent GS 2033 worth Rs 4,479 crore, 6.92 per cent GS 2039 of Rs 2,304 crore, and 6.19 per cent GS 2034 of Rs 1,104 crore, it said.

The liquidity in the banking system, currently, is estimated to be in surplus of around Rs 2.41 lakh crore.

The OMO purchase auction was announced ahead of expected heavy outflows from the banking system due to advance tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) payments scheduled later this month. This comes even as liquidity conditions in the banking system currently remain in a significant surplus of Rs 3.02 lakh crore.

As per RBI data, it has infused Rs 2.50 lakh crore through OMO purchases of government securities so far since the start of this calendar year.

Meanwhile, the government has bought back G-secs worth Rs 6,309 crore from the switch auction conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and has issued bonds worth Rs 6,431.797 crore, according to a release.

Government securities (G-Secs) are low-risk debt instruments that are issued by the government and offer fixed returns and are backed by a sovereign guarantee.

The securities repurchased by the government were part of the scheduled bonds set to mature in the next financial year.

This is the fourth switch auction by the RBI since February. *—PTI*

Investors lose Rs 22L cr as markets crash over 2%

Sensex declines by 1,352.74 pts; Nifty tumbles 422.40 pts

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Equity investors became poorer by Rs 22.40 lakh crore since the beginning of the conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran, which has rattled stock markets, driving the BSE Sensex lower by 4.6 per cent.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,352.74 points, or 1.71 per cent, to settle at 77,566.16, registering its second day of decline. During the day, the benchmark crashed 2,494.35 points, or 3.16 per cent, to 76,424.55.

On similar lines, the 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 422.40 points, or 1.73 per cent, to end at 24,028.05. Intra-day, it tumbled 752.65 points, or 3.07 per cent, to 23,697.80.

Since 27 February, the 30-share BSE Sensex has tanked 3,721.03 points or 4.57 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies dropped sharply by Rs 22,40,408.82 crore to Rs 4,41,10,262.45 crore (USD 4.78 trillion) during this time.

UltraTech Cement was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, tumbling 5.09 per cent, followed by Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, InterGlobe Aviation, and Adani Ports, which were among the major laggards.

In contrast, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were the gainers.

The BSE smallcap select index dived 2.11 per cent and the midcap select index tanked 2.08 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended lower.

The BSE mid-small private banks quality tilt tumbled 4.50 per cent, PSU Bank (3.92 per cent), auto (3.89 per cent), services (3.37 per cent), Bankex (3.16 per cent), oil & gas (3.11 per cent) and Private Banks index (2.89 per cent).

A total of 3,379 stocks declined, while 972 advanced and 185 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

WORLD MARKETS

DOW (US)	47,070.29	(0.95%)
S&P 500 (US)	6,718.47	(0.63%)
Nasdaq (US)	22,305.60	(0.37%)
Nikkei (Japan)	52,728.72	(5.20%)
Hang Seng CHN	25,408.47	(1.35%)
DAX (Germany)	23,335.88	(1.08%)
FTSE 100 (UK)	10,212.87	(0.70%)
CAC 40 (Paris)	7,878.04	(1.44%)
KOSPI S Korea	5,251.87	(5.96%)

Oil & paint companies' stocks tumble

Shares of oil marketing companies and paint manufacturers ended lower on Monday amid a sharp rally in crude oil prices due to the deepening conflict in West Asia, which has entered the second week. The stock of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd dropped 6.12 per cent, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd tanked 5.05 per cent, and Indian Oil Corporation declined 4.30 per cent on the BSE. Shares of Shalimar Paints tumbled 4.18 per cent, Indigo Paints dropped 3.83 per cent, Asian Paints 2.75 per cent and Kansai Nerolac Paints 2.09 per cent. *—PTI*

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman *–PTI*

Global crude price hike won't impact inflation majorly: FM

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The impact of global crude price rise on inflation is not substantial now as India's inflation is near the lower bound, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday.

Sitharaman said the price of both global crude oil and the Indian basket has been on a declining trajectory for the past one year, till the clashes commenced in West Asia.

Between the end of February and 2 March, the crude oil FOB price (Indian Basket) rose from USD 69.01/barrel to USD 80.16/barrel.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Report had estimated that if crude oil prices are higher by 10 per cent than the baseline assumptions, and assuming full pass-through to domestic prices, inflation could turn out to be higher by 30 basis points.

However, the medium-term impact of the global crude oil price rise on inflation depends on several factors, including exchange rate movements, global demand and supply situation, monetary policy transmission and the extent of the indirect pass-through.

The average retail inflation declined from 4.6 per cent in 2024-25 to 1.8 per cent in 2025-26 (April – January).

The headline inflation for January 2026 stood at 2.75 per cent and is near the lower bound of the RBI's inflation tolerance band of 4 per cent ± 2 per cent. The Monetary Policy Committee also reduced the policy rate by 125 basis points, Sitharaman said.

The government has also undertaken several administrative measures, including fiscal and trade policy, to control inflation. *—PTI*

Rupee falls to all-time low of 92.35 against USD

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

The rupee crashed to its all-time closing low of 92.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, losing 53 paise during the session, as global crude oil prices saw a sharp spike, and the greenback strengthened amid worsening conflict in West Asia.

Withdrawal of foreign funds amid intense selling in domestic equity markets further pressured the rupee, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 92.22 and rose briefly to 92.15 but kept losing ground through the session before eventually settling at its all-time low of 92.35 (provisional), down 53 paise from its previous close.

The rupee depreciated 18 paise against the US dollar on Friday to close at 91.82 against the American currency.

"The rupee opened sharply lower, hitting a fresh record low of 92.35 on weak global markets and an overnight surge in crude oil prices. Oil prices surged around 25 per cent in the Asian session. Strong dollar and FII outflows also pressured the rupee," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

The dollar index, which gauges greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.35 per cent higher at 99.33. *—PTI*

Silver slides to ₹2.68L/kg, Gold stays at ₹1.64L/10g

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Silver prices declined by Rs 3,400 to Rs 2.68 lakh per kg, and gold traded almost flat at Rs 1,64,300 per 10g in the national capital on Monday as a firm US dollar dampened the precious metals' demand amid volatile global markets.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal extended its losses for the third straight day by plunging Rs 3,400, or nearly 1.3 per cent, to Rs 2,68,300 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,71,700 per kg.

Higher energy prices tend to feed into broader inflation expectations, which may delay the pace of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. This scenario supported the US dollar and Treasury yields, which in turn weighed on precious metals, he added.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.9 per cent purity rose marginally by Rs 200 to Rs 1,64,300 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Gold had settled at Rs 1,64,100 per 10g in the previous market session, Association said.

Globally, spot gold fell USD 65.23, or 1.26 per cent, to trade at USD 5,105.89 per ounce, while silver was also trading 0.53 per cent lower at USD 83.92 per ounce. *—PTI*

AMID WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Nasscom warns firms of cyber risks, activates contingency plans

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

IT industry body Nasscom on Monday said that companies are reviewing contingency framework to ensure operational continuity and service delivery to mitigate potential disruptions amid the conflict in West Asia.

It advised technology companies to heighten vigilance and preparedness across cybersecurity frameworks.

The conflict in West Asia disrupted airspace and raised concerns over regional stability, cyber threats, and potential spillover effects on global technology infrastructure, travel routes, and maritime trade.

It also rattled global markets, as investors turned cautious amid fears around interruption in the global supply of oil and gas, as well as logistics and technology-related disruptions.

Firms are also prioritising employee safety by enabling work-from-home arrangements for staff in affected areas.

Drones had hit three of Amazon's clout computing businesses in the UAE and Bahrain last week.

The advisory also recommends that companies evaluate alternate routing options for cloud infrastructure and data centres to maintain system resilience and safeguard critical services.

Organisations are also engaging with their clients to communicate preparedness and ensure the continuity of services. *—PTI*

Bengaluru's Hical Tech to supply Rafale aircraft parts

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Bengaluru-based aerospace manufacturer Hical Technologies has received a contract from Dassault Aviation to manufacture products for Rafale fighter aircraft control systems applications.

Hical Technologies said it will deliver mission-critical products that meet Dassault Aviation's stringent engineering, qualification, and reliability standards under the agreement.

"Hical Technologies has demonstrated a strong commitment to quality and reliability — values that strongly align with Dassault Aviation's heritage of excellence," said Bruno Coiffier, senior executive vice president, procurement & purchasing, Dassault Aviation. "This milestone is a testament to the years of engineering investment, precision manufacturing discipline, and quality culture that our teams at Hical have built," said Yashas Jaiveer, managing director, Hical Technologies.

"Being entrusted with critical products for the Rafale is a recognition that Indian aerospace manufacturing has arrived on the global stage," Jaiveer said.

The firm said that its inclusion in the Rafale programme positions the country as a strategic contributor to one of the world's most operationally active fighter aircraft platforms. *—PTI*

TO BOOST AI-LED MFG

TCS launches Gemini experience centre in the US

MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday announced the launch of a new Gemini Experience Centre in Troy, Michigan in the USaimed at accelerating the adoption of artificial intelligence-driven solutions in the manufacturing sector.

The new facility, established in partnership with Google Cloud, is the seventh Gemini Experience Centre (GEC) globally and focuses on developing Physical AI solutions designed specifically for industrial and manufacturing environments.

According to the company, the centre will allow manufacturers to explore, test and scale AI-powered use cases to improve safety, quality and operational efficiency. The facility integrates Google's Gemini models with TCS' manufacturing expertise and features the TCS Physical AI Blueprint, an end-to-end framework combining robotics, advanced sensing technologies, edge intelligence and secure cloud orchestration.

The Troy-based centre will showcase several use cases, including autonomous patrolling and surveillance, environmental anomaly detection, personal protective equipment (PPE) compliance monitoring, intelligent quality inspection, progress mapping and predictive equipment health monitoring.

Speaking about the initiative, Anupam Singhal, President, Manufacturing at TCS, said Physical AI brings intelligence closer to real-world operations and enables organizations to extend decision-making capabilities into environments that may be risky or inefficient for humans.

Saurabh Tiwary, Vice President and General Manager of Cloud AI at Google Cloud, said the collaboration aims to accelerate the deployment of agentic AI in industrial operations.

The launch forms part of TCS' broader expansion of Gemini Experience Centres globally.

The company said it plans to establish a total of 13 such centres by the end of 2026, including six additional facilities scheduled to open later this year. *—ANI*

Meesho gets ₹1,500 cr I-T demand notice

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

E-commerce company Meesho has received a tax demand notice of approximately Rs 1,500 crore, including interest, which it intends to contest, according to a recent filing.

The notice was issued on March 6 for the assessment year 2023-24. The assessment unit of the Income Tax Department has raised a demand of Rs 14,99,73,82,840, citing certain additions and adjustments to the income reported by the company.

Meesho stated that it is evaluating the order and does not agree with the observations or adjustments made. The company believes it has sufficient legal and factual grounds to challenge the demand and is taking steps to protect its interests. A similar demand was issued in 2022-23, disclosed in the firm's December 2025 prospectus. *—PTI*

ABB to invest $75M in India for mfg expansion

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Electrification and automation leader ABB announced plans to invest an additional USD 75 million in India during 2026, aimed at expanding manufacturing and R&D capabilities.

This investment follows a prior spend of over USD 35 million in 2025, reflecting a strong commitment to its "local-for-local" strategy.

Around 85 per cent of ABB's products sold in India are manufactured locally. The investment will bolster growth across electrification, motion, and automation sectors, supporting India's status as a global manufacturing hub. Over the past decade, ABB has invested over $230 million in India, with 2025 marking its 76th year of operations in the country. Investments include $14 million in Nelamangala, $21 million in Peenya, $12 million in Hyderabad, $22 million in Nashik, and $6 million in Vadodara. *—PTI*

-PTI

South Africa, West Indies set to leave India today

KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

The West Indies and South Africa squads have finally received confirmation regarding their departure from India after their campaigns in the ICC T20 World Cup came to an end. According to a report by ESPNcricinfo, both teams are currently stationed in Kolkata and are scheduled to leave in the early hours of Tuesday, on a charter flight bound for Johannesburg. The logistical complications followed the teams' respective exits from the tournament, with West Indies knocked out in the Super Eight stage after losing to India on 1 March, while South Africa's campaign ended with a semi-final defeat to New Zealand on 4 March.While confirmation of the charter flight has now provided some certainty.—*PTI*

Radhamani and Sahil register wins in World Boxing

BAGHDAD, 9 MARCH

The Indian Youth boxing team continued its campaign at the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026 in Bangkok with mixed results on the second day of competition, as Radhamani Longjam and Sahil Duhan secured victories in their respective bouts.

In the women's 57kg category, Longjam delivered a commanding performance to defeat her opponent from Uzbekistan, sealing the bout with a Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) in the third round.

In the men's division, Duhan (60kg) continued his impressive run in the tournament with a dominant 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Turkmenistan. Meanwhile, Udham Singh (55kg) put up a close fight but went down 3-2 against Japan in a tightly contested bout.—*PTI*

-PTI

Young talent needs to be tested in B'desh: Hesson

KARACHI, 9 MARCH

Pakistan's white-ball coach Mike Hesson says the exclusion of senior players such as Babar Azam, Saim Ayub, and Naseem Shah from the One-day series in Bangladesh should not be construed as punishment for non-performance in the just-concluded T20 World Cup. Under fire after Pakistan's exit before the knockout stage, Hesson insisted that Pakistan had scant opportunities to test young, promising talent, and the series in Bangladesh was one such chance. "I wouldn't say anyone was dropped. We just see this series as an opportunity to give these promising players a chance to prove themselves," he said.—*PTI*

Jose Mourinho says he was called 'traitor'

LONDON, 9 MARCH

Jose Mourinho claimed a rival coach "called me a traitor 50 times" after being sent off in the final minutes of the latest frenetic "O Clássico" between fierce rivals Benfica and Porto on Sunday. The 63-year-old Mourinho was shown a red card in the 90th minute of the 2-2 draw, with the Benfica coach saying after the game he was sanctioned for kicking a ball toward Porto's substitutes' bench. In quotes carried by Portuguese daily A Bola, Mourinho said that wasn't his intention. "Many times ... I kick the ball toward the stands to give a lucky fan a chance," Mourinho said in the post-match news conference.—*PTI*

Sindhu pulls out of Swiss Open; Prannoy, Srikanth to lead

BASEL, 9 MARCH

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu will give the Swiss Open a miss as she recovers from the three-day ordeal in Dubai, while H S Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth will spearhead the Indian challenge at the USD 250,000 tournament starting here on Tuesday.

Sindhu had to withdraw from the All England Championships after being stranded in Dubai for three days due to Gulf airspace restrictions following the US and Israeli bombing of Iran and the subsequent retaliation by Tehran. She was to travel to Birmingham via Dubai, but could not do so.

"She is not playing at the Swiss Open. We all know what she went through in Dubai; she couldn't travel to Birmingham. So she has sought some time to recover from it," Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary Sanjay Mishra told PTI.

After returning home, Sindhu had confessed that she struggled to remain calm during the ordeal in Dubai, wishing it to be the first and

last such experience in her life.

"There was a lot of stress. And it was scary. I think the only thing was to stay calm. I know that's not the ideal situation where you say we are calm, but we're not inside," Sindhu had said.

"Actually, it is very stressful. But I think it is an experience, I must say. And I hope it's the first and the last experience like this."

Sindhu is likely to return to action at the Badminton Asia Championships in April.

In men's singles, Srikanth, who reached two finals last year at the Malaysia Masters and Syed Modi International, will open against Jason Gunawan, who had dashed his hopes of ending a title drought in Lucknow. —*PTI*

P V Sindhu —*PTI*

Surya and Co. want to extend dominance with Olympic gold

Los Angeles 2028 will see cricket return to Olympics

AHMEDABAD, 9 MARCH

The on-field celebrations after India's second T20 World Cup title in 18 months were not particularly exuberant, to say the least. Perhaps they reflected the habit of winning that the shortest format team has normalised.

Yes, there were smiles and hugs all around, and a few of the players even did an impromptu bhangra gig after one of the most emphatic wins in ICC finals. Yet, the players' immediate reactions suggested that deep down they knew only an exceptionally bad day in office could have denied them the trophy.

Rohit Sharma and his team getting over the line in that 2024 final in Barbados ended a prolonged period of heartbreak in world events. The victory on Sunday night had an air of inevitability to it.

Dhoni lauds Gambhir and team after historic T20 WC win

India's history-making T20 World Cup triumph here reactivated the enigmatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni on social media after nearly two years, and he took the opportunity to tell head coach Gautam Gambhir how good a smile looks on his intense face said on Monday Dhoni's last Instagram post was back in 2024. "History gets created at Ahmedabad, big congratulations to the team and support staff and to all the fans of the Indian Cricket Team worldwide. Such a pleasure to see all of you play," he posted after attending the final in which India thrashed New Zealand by 96 runs to win the trophy for an unprecedented third time. "Coach Sahab's smile looks great on you. Intensity with a smile is a killer combo, very well done. enjoy guys...BUMRAH ke

baare mein kuch na likhoon tou hi acha hai. CHAMPION BOWLER (It's better if I don't write anything on Bumrah)," he quipped, referring to Gambhir's mostly serious demeanour.

Gambhir responded to Dhoni, saying he felt nice to see the former skipper at the stadium. —*PTI*

Gauti bhai took two steps, I took two and we met somewhere in middle: SKY

After Rahul Dravid finished his tenure as the Indian cricket team's head coach, the then captain Rohit Sharma had talked about how the legend was perceived to be his "work wife" by his better half.When one watches his T20 successor Suryakumar Yadav speak about current head coach Gautam Gambhir, the equation seems as comfortable and built on mutual trust and respect as it was between Rohit and Dravid."I think I have played cricket with Gauti bhai for four years (in Kolkata Knight Riders), and I knew how he thinks. He will take two steps, I will take two, and we will meet somewhere in the middle," Suryakumar said when asked about his relationship with Gambhir since the duo started headlining the shortest format team after the 2024 T20 World Cup triumph under Dravid and Rohit.

84 MATCHES INSTEAD OF 74

IPL starts on 28 March, final in B'luru on 31 May

BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Cricket followers across India are preparing for a larger Indian Premier League as IPL 2026 approaches. The tournament features 84 matches instead of 74, making it the biggest season so far. Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who defeated Punjab Kings in IPL 2025, again headline the competition starting in late March.

Broadcaster Star Sports confirms that IPL 2026 begins on 28 March, following the announcement on 8 March 2026. The complete fixtures list is still pending, but Royal Challengers Bengaluru will attempt to extend the title run from 2025. Fans await details on match timings, travel plans, and ticket arrangements.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India plans to release the IPL 2026 schedule in two parts. Officials are watching the Assembly Elections in West Bengal and Assam before finalising every date. Fixtures for the first 15 days will appear first, with remaining matches announced after polling schedules are clear.

Playoffs for IPL 2026 will start on 26 May, bringing

knockout cricket into focus. Bengaluru is confirmed to stage Qualifier 1 and the title match on 31 May, 2026. The Eliminator and Qualifier 2 are likely in Ahmedabad and Raipur, although the final decision from organisers is still awaited.

Confusion over the IPL schedule announcement was triggered because, according to Jio TV, the IPL schedule was set to be announced at 4 PM. According to reports, the latest TV schedules from host broadcaster Star Sports indicate that the IPL 2026 fixtures are likely to be revealed at either 4 PM IST or 6 PM IST and now at 9 PM on Monday, 9 March, though the exact time has not been officially confirmed. —*PTI*

Emma Raducanu was knocked out of Indian Wells by Amanda

INDIAN WELLS, 9 MARCH

Emma Raducanu suffered a quick exit to Amanda Anisimova at Indian Wells, losing a third-round clash 6-1, 6-1 in just 52 minutes.

Anisimova reached the Wimbledon and US Open finals last year and is the world No 6, and the level of her play was on full show against Raducanu.

After her split from coach Francisco Roig earlier this year, Raducanu had reunited with Mark Petchey on a day-to-day basis during this tournament. While she had played well in her opening game, when she dispatched Anastasia Zakharova in straight sets, Raducanu struggled with Anisimova.

The American had Raducanu

under pressure from the start as she broke the Briton's serve in the very first game.

Bhambri and Goransson move to pre-quarters

India's top doubles player, Yuki Bhambri, and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson had an easy day in the office, winning in straight sets against David Pel and Fabrice Martin at the Indian Wells Masters here.The unseeded Indo-Swedish pair

won 6-1, 6-3 as they broke the French-Dutch combo five times in the opening round of the ATP 1000 event.Bhambri and Goransson served five aces to three of their opponents.

Pel and Martin served six double faults in the 66-minute contest.They will next face the giant-killing team of Sander Arends and Jiri Lehecka, who knocked out second seed British pair of Julian Cash and Lloyd Glasspool. —*PTI*

HELPED ME REGAIN FORM

SAMSON SAID HE APPROACHED TOURNAMENT WITH A DIFFERENT GAME PLAN

T'PURAM, 9 MARCH

Star batsman Sanju Samson, who helped India lift the T20 World Cup, on Monday said he approached the tournament with a different game plan that helped him regain form.

He was speaking to reporters after returning to Thiruvananthapuram following India's World Cup triumph.

Samson, who won the 'Man of the Tournament' award for his performance in the cricket T20 World Cup, received a grand welcome at the airport, where he was greeted by Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty upon arrival in the evening.

Hundreds of cricket fans gathered outside the airport, raising slogans in support of the Kerala cricketer.

Speaking about the change in his batting approach, Samson said with a smile that earlier he had tried to attack every ball and often got out.

"I tried to hit every ball, but it did not work. Then I had to learn from those failures. In the five-match series, I tried to increase my strike rate, but it didn't work. —*PTI*

Sri Lanka appoints Gary Kirsten as head coach

COLOMBO, 9 MARCH

Former India World Cup-winning coach Gary Kirsten was appointed head coach of the Sri Lanka cricket team on Monday for a two-year contract starting 15 April.

Kirsten, a former South African opener who later built a successful reputation as a coach, will remain in the role until April 14, 2028, and will primarily oversee Sri Lanka's preparations for the 2027 ODI World Cup, to be held in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

Confirming the appointment in a media release, Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said the move is part of its broader effort to revamp the structure of the National High Performance Center and strengthen the national side ahead of major global events.

Kirsten brings with him a wealth of international coaching experience, having previously guided India to the 2011 World Cup triumph during his tenure from 2008 to 2011. —*PTI*

AFC Asian Cup: India women face Chinese Taipei in a virtual knockout

SYDNEY, 9 MARCH

India women's football team faces a must-win clash as they take on Chinese Taipei in their last Group C match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Tuesday.

India is currently bottom of the group at fourth place with zero points from two matches after having lost against Vietnam (1-2) and Japan (0-11).

Japan is at the top of the group with six points from two games, while Chinese Taipei and Vietnam are second and third, respectively, with both sides tied on three points apiece.

However, the Blue Tigresses still have a chance to make it to the quarter-finals, should they defeat Chinese Taipei by a margin of two goals or more, and if Japan defeats Vietnam on Tuesday in the simultaneous kick-off.

Even a victory by a margin of one goal may be enough, should the match between Bangladesh and Uzbekistan on Monday end in a draw. The top two teams from each of the three groups, along with the two best third-place finishers, will make it to the last eight.

India head coach Amelia Valverde highlighted the importance of putting the past results behind them after the last two matches. —*PTI*

-PTI

DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY WAR

Iran soccer team exits Women's AC, faces prospect of returning home

GOLD COAST , 9 MARCH

Iran's football team lost its last group match at the Women's Asian Cup on Sunday and had to contemplate returning home to a country embroiled in war.

The Iranian women's squad arrived in Australia for the continental championship last month, before the war that began with the US-Israel February 28 strikes on Iran. Teams ousted during the group stage usually leave within days, but organisers have not announced details for the departure of the Iran

delegation.

Australia's national news agency quoted Iran's head coach Marziyeh Jafari saying the squad "want to come back to Iran as soon as we can".

"I want to be with my country and home.... We are eager to come back," AAP quoted Jafari as telling a post-match news conference.

Their silence during the anthem before an opening loss to South Korea last Monday was viewed by some as an act of resistance and others as a show of mourning.

The team has not clarified. But the players sang the national anthem and saluted during the national anthem ahead of their 4-0 loss to Australia last Thursday and a 2-0 loss to the Philippines on Sunday. —*PTI*

Iraq coach Arnold urges FIFA to delay his team's World Cup playoff

BAGHDAD, 9 MARCH

Iraq head coach Graham Arnold has issued an urgent plea to soccer's international governing body to delay his team's intercontinental qualifier for the World Cup because of disruptions caused by the escalating Iran war.

The Iraq squad faces major logistical issues ahead of a winner-takes-all playoff against either Suriname or Bolivia, scheduled for March 31 in Monterrey, Mexico.

With Iraqi airspace closed until April 1 due to the esca-

lating conflict, Arnold's squad — containing predominantly players from the domestic league — is unable to fully gather.

Players haven't secured visas for the playoff tournament in Mexico due to foreign embassy closures, and Arnold is stranded in the United Arab Emirates due to the conflict.

"Please help us with this game because right now we are struggling to get our players out of the country of Iraq," Arnold, a former coach of Australia's national team, told the Australian Associated Press.

The turmoil has already forced the postponement of a planned training camp in Houston. Arnold said fielding a team comprised only of overseas-based players is not a viable option. —*PTI*